Rediscovering the Forgotten Music of the Holocaust: The Life and Music of the Dutch-Jewish Composer Sim Gokkes

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Abstract

The Dutch-Jewish composer Sim Gokkes was born in Amsterdam in 1897, later to be murdered, along with many other Dutch-Jewish composers, in Auschwitz in 1943. A victim of Nazi persecution, relatively little is known about his music as most of his compositions were lost or destroyed by the Nazis during World War II. This thesis includes an exploration of the contemporary political background in Germany and the Netherlands, an account of Gokkes's life, musical background and how this, in turn, influenced his compositional work, with a particular reference to Gokkes's juxtaposition of traditional, Jewish liturgical music and new compositional techniques in European art music of that time. Thus, the thesis serves to re-discover Gokkes's largely forgotten works and contribute towards the development of a greater understanding of Dutch modern music in the first decades of the twentieth century. This is currently an understudied area.

The first section of this thesis provides a historical background with details of the effects on Dutch music of the Nazi policy of condemning any music that was 'degenerate' and considered to manifest symptoms of national decline (Levi, 2001: 35-36). This included all works by Jewish composers in Germany, and later in the Netherlands.

The second section is biographical, providing a detailed and chronological account of the composer's life, his work as a composer and conductor and how this influenced his mature composing style and output, and finally his persecution at the hands of the Nazis. This section also touches upon how several Dutch composers, including Gokkes, were influenced by a rise in Jewish nationalism in music which started in Russia and spread across Europe in the early part of the twentieth century. It illustrates how Gokkes was arguably regarded as the most Jewish sounding of the Dutch-Jewish composers of the early twentieth century, due to his efforts to bring aspects of specifically Jewish musical thought into Dutch art-music practice.

The third section is an overview and cultural analysis of Gokkes's music, exploring Gokkes in the context of his Jewish faith and how his writing of both secular music

and music for the synagogue was innovative while investigating the argument that he juxtaposed ancient Jewish techniques with modern Western art-music methods.

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Introduction

Research context

One tragic effect of the exclusionary policies implemented by the Nazis in the lead up to the Holocaust during World War II was the fact that in 1941, music by Jewish composers was forbidden in the Nazi-occupied Netherlands. Initially, music suppressed and considered 'harmful' or 'degenerate' under the Third Reich in Germany was known as *Entartete Musik* (Degenerate Music), and included jazz and music written by modernist composers and political opponents of the regime. Importantly, it also included music written by Jewish composers who, in particular were vilified in the German press regardless of the style of music that they composed. Prompted by the *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) exhibition organised by Adolf Ziegler in 1937, another public exhibition entitled 'Entartete Musik' was initially organised in Düsseldorf in 1938, with organiser Hans Severus Ziegler stating in a pamphlet that the decay of music was 'due to the influence of Judaism and capitalism' (Mosse and Carlebach, 1991: 280). This exhibition was not publicly sanctioned by all of the Nazi high command, but nevertheless it embarked upon a tour of Germany in an attempt to make the maximum amount of impact with regard to spreading the message of degeneracy in music to the general population. Moreover, the ostracization of so-called *Entartete Musik* may never have been *officially* implemented as a music-cultural policy in Germany and may have remained loosely interpreted in many of its implications; however, its purpose of persecuting Jewish composers and political opponents was still vigorously applied. The situation would be the same in the occupied Netherlands.

Consequently, much of the music of Dutch-Jewish composers has been largely forgotten. Many talented composers were murdered in the death camps during the Holocaust, among them Sim Gokkes who was music director of Amsterdam's Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam. Gokkes along with his immediate family perished in Auschwitz in 1943 and most of his compositions have been lost or destroyed.

A small number of Gokkes's compositions survived the Holocaust and are archived at the Netherlands Music Institute in The Hague, and what we do know from his preserved works is that he had a preference for composing on Jewish and biblical themes. In fact, much of his music was used during his lifetime for worship in the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam, as, according to one of the few scholars focusing on persecuted Dutch composers, Gokkes wanted to access what he considered to be the 'authenticity and purity of traditional Jewish melodies' (Scholten, 2015: 98). According to Scholten, Gokkes felt that the 'influences of secular music had become too dominating' (Scholten, 2015: 98), but conversely, he also chose to incorporate modernist art-music methods in much of his revival of what he considered authenticity. This creates a productive tension in his music, and a chief object of fascination for the interpreter.

His manuscripts that survive are archived in Nederlands Muziek Instituut (Netherlands Music Institute), The Hague, and the works '*Kinah*', Psalm 130 and Psalm 92 are the only ones to be currently published by Donemus Publishing in the Netherlands.

There is very little research or literature in existence regarding Sim Gokkes and Dutch music of this period. Although there has however been a very small amount of research into Gokkes, the limited literature and research that does exist is mainly about forbidden music in the Netherlands in a more general form and has mainly been written in the Dutch language. In this, I include the work of Carine Alders and Eleonore Pameijer, both of whom have done invaluable work in promoting the work of several Dutch-Jewish composers at the Leo Smit Foundation, as well as the work of Dutch musicologists Leo Samama and Emanuel Overbeeke. There is one significant contribution in English in the form of a chapter written by Dutch musicologist Dario van Gammeren, focusing on the general effects that the German occupation had on music in the Netherlands during that period. Most of this already existing research has encompassed the Dutch-Jewish composers for whom a more substantial amount of archival evidence already exists. This does not extend to Sim Gokkes, however, and in this respect, this has proven to be a major limitation in my research process for the present thesis. On the other hand, Dutch newspaper archives have enabled me to piece together an accurate account of Gokkes's

musical life, with accounts of his political views, his musical opinions, reviews of his conducting and composing efforts, information on works that were lost or destroyed, and even an insight into the public's perceptions of both him and his work. Therefore, this thesis addresses the following broad areas:

a) **Gokkes's musical background and how this influenced his composing style and output**

Vocal music and opera had a large influence on the conducting and composing activities of Gokkes and from an early age, he took singing lessons from opera singer Ben Geysel. We are unsure when Gokkes started composing but his music was performed at the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam during a period where he was receiving musical coaching from cantor Victor Schlesinger. He later studied at the Amsterdam Conservatory, ending in 1919 as a piano student of Sem Dresden. After completing his studies Gokkes became a choir conductor, musical director at the Portuguese Synagogue and conducted several operas with *De Vereenigde Zangers* at various Amsterdam theatres including the Theater Bellvue in 1927 and the Hollandsche Schouwburg in 1930. As a conductor, he notably rescued many operas from oblivion including works by Cherubini and Cimarosa. I will show that Gokkes's three early music teachers had a significant effect on his musical development, with Geysel creating the platform for his later passion for secular choral and operatic conducting, Schlesinger providing teaching with regards to synagogue music, and Dresden for helping Gokkes acquire his unique style of composing.

b) **how his compositions for the synagogue were innovative due to the apparent paradox in his compositions between what he saw as 'authentic', pure Jewish melodies alongside new music techniques of that time**

As previously stated Gokkes 'wanted to bring back the purity and authenticity of traditional Jewish melodies' (Scholten, 2015: 98) as he felt strongly that the influences of secular music, including opera, had become far too dominating, an opinion ironically created partly through his own operatic activities with the resurrection of neglected works by Cherubini and Cimarosa. He consequently wrote a book of synagogue songs entitled *Sjire Kodesh* consisting of works written

throughout his career and finally published in Amsterdam by Broekmans en Van Poppel in 1937. *Sjire Kodesh* was composed to accompany services at the synagogue and included new modernist music techniques from the secular world in many of its works.

The initial idea for conducting research into the life and music of the Dutch-Jewish composer Sim Gokkes was motivated by my personal family circumstances. Some years back, my partner Jo Fitzgerald was conducting genealogical research into her family ancestry and discovered that unknown to her and her family, she actually had Sephardic Jewish roots. Her grandmother's surname was Rimini, but the family assumed that this was a link to Italian heritage. Further investigation traced the family lineage back to Rachel Rimini born in 1864, who married David Gokkes (born 1862). They had several children, one of whom was Simon or Sim Gokkes.

This research project is therefore important on several counts: it provides valuable information for surviving members of the family; it is an act of remembrance for a talented composer whose life, career and legacy were tragically cut short by the murderous acts of the Nazi regime. In an attempt to address the above-mentioned areas *a* and *b* this thesis is divided into three sections.

The first section provides essential context: although it does not directly touch upon the life and work of Sim Gokkes, it introduces the historical and political foundations that would ultimately affect him due to the fact that, through no fault of his own, his life and musical career would ultimately be cut short due to his birthright.

The seeds of this persecution were sown prior to Hitler's rise to power in 1933, with antisemitism being part of the Nazi political platform long before the party came to power. Direct persecution was accelerated shortly before the start of World War II in 1939 with the *Reichskristallnacht* of November 9, 1938, with this becoming the main catalyst for future proceedings when German Jews were attacked, properties looted, and synagogues burnt to the ground. This racial hatred is difficult for many of us to understand, but the Dutch-Jewish historian Jacques Presser (1899-1970) sums up antisemitism as 'a form of xenophobia, hatred of strangers, hatred and rejection in this case of the Jews, because they are strangers, because they are different. A very

particular kind of xenophobia, if only because of its persistence in history, returning everywhere and all the time. This can be explained by the fact that, of all “strangers” in history, the Jews are the only people who have not been able or willing to become extinct’ (Presser, 2010: 553). The violence in Germany linked to antisemitism maybe should have been a clear warning to the Dutch Jews even before the German occupation of Holland on May 10, 1940. However, for most, this was not to be the case, with many Jews attempting to carry on life as normal until the first wave of deportations to the Westerbork transit camp began on July 14, 1942. Sim Gokkes was one of the Nazis’ early victims in this respect.

As a means of providing context for Gokkes’s life, explored in the second section, it is important to consider first the growth of Dutch art-music from the nineteenth century onwards. Consequently, the preceding chapter will look at the important role that the establishment of the Dutch music conservatories, the Concertgebouw, and the Concertgebouw Orchestra played in creating the strong musical culture that existed in the Netherlands, to which Gokkes made a significant contribution in the years prior to the German occupation.

The second section of this thesis looks at the life of Sim Gokkes, his family background, musical education, professional life, and the circumstances of his death. The section makes extensive use of archival documents that I have collected from the Netherlands Music Institute in The Hague, and also records of his time at Westerbork transit camp before deportation to Auschwitz which have been kindly supplied by Paul Beek. Copies of Gokkes’s original record cards from his time at Westerbork provide an invaluable insight into his experience during his Nazi captivity and provide harrowing details of his desperate plight with the Expositur, which was a department of the Jewish Council in Amsterdam, headed by Austrian Edwin Sluzker. It was at the Expositur that the registrations of deportation exemptions, or ‘sperren’, were processed, and where Gokkes himself evidently tried to gain an exemption from deportation to his ultimate murder at Auschwitz. Gokkes’s musical education, as also treated here, is an important area of investigation as it enables us to gain an insight into what influenced Gokkes and his musical development throughout his life. Certainly, Ben Geysel was very influential in Gokkes’s movements within the secular world, particularly Gokkes’s significant involvement with conducting secular choirs

and embracing the *Liedertafel* style of singing. Geysel, a musician involved with opera during his time in Berlin, was also influential in Gokkes's revival of long-neglected operas.

Victor Schlesinger, on the other hand, played a big role in Gokkes's musical education for the synagogue, a part of his life that would increase in importance throughout his musical career both in terms of conducting and composing. Gokkes went on to conduct several synagogue choirs including Santo Servicio which was the resident choir at the Portuguese Jewish Synagogue in Amsterdam, and still survives to this day. Gokkes's early compositions for the synagogue display the hallmarks of Schlesinger's 'reformation'-based influence; an influence that Gokkes would later reject in favour of returning to the ancient techniques that, from his perspective, had long been neglected.

Sem Dresden taught Gokkes during his time at the Amsterdam Conservatory, and his influence and guidance are evident in many of Gokkes's compositions. However, Dresden was a teacher who did not generally impose styles and opinions upon his pupils. Nonetheless, Dresden's love of the 'Impressionism' of Debussy and other French composers is certainly evident in some of Gokkes's work, but, as we shall see in Part Three of the present thesis, his was a unique style displaying an eclectic mix of influences such as Milhaud, Stravinsky, Ravel, and Schoenberg, as well as the traditional Jewish liturgical influences mentioned above.

Part Three looks at Gokkes's compositions in two categories: those that were probably looted and destroyed by the Nazis, and those that survive in the form of original manuscripts stored at the Netherlands Music Institute in The Hague. Newspaper archives provide an invaluable insight into the works that no longer survive, in the form of concert reviews and contemporary articles. Many of these have never been translated and analysed before and have hence enabled me to attempt to piece together missing parts of the puzzle. My investigation of newspaper archives and original music manuscripts will attempt to illustrate Gokkes's stylistic development, but more importantly to address the earlier statement of how his compositions for the synagogue were innovative due to the tension in his

compositions between ‘authentic’ Jewish melodies and new art-music techniques of that time.

Part One

The Build-up to Dutch-Jewish Persecution by the Nazis

Chapter One – The Situation in Germany

Entartete Musik and *Reichsmusikkammer*

Wir haben das internationale Judentum aus dem Kulturleben ausgemerzt, wir haben die Theater und Kinopaläste gesäubert, wir haben dem deutschen Volk wieder eine anständige Presse gegeben und wir haben das ganze Geistes- und Kulturleben auf eine neue Basis gestellt.

We have eradicated International Jewry from cultural life; we have purged the theatres and cinemas and we have returned a respectable press to the German people. We have placed our entire intellectual and cultural life onto a new foundation.

Speech by Joseph Goebbels in Hamburg, 3 March 1933. (Haas 2014: 200)

It could be argued that the chain of events that led to the persecution and, in many cases, murder of Dutch-Jewish composers like Sim Gokkes at the hands of the Nazis began in Germany in 1871, where the emancipation of the Jews started with the proclamation of the German Empire. Once this had happened, becoming part of the 'most cultivated and liberal society in Europe, [Jews] embraced all things German with a creative enthusiasm that came close to mania' (Haas, 2014: 2). The end of the long period of being outsiders looking in resulted in a huge amount of creative inventiveness. There were of course antisemites who rejected this new cultural and political equality, but the more this happened, the more the creative output of German-Jewish artists was stimulated, and the overall effect was the

enrichment of existing cultural life. This importance of Jewish musicians gradually grew and, over a period of fifty years, led to there being a perception of Jewish near-dominance within German and Austrian musical life with sufficient number of Jews holding down influential positions within German musical life for Nazi propaganda to gain a degree of credibility. During their political rise in the 1920s, the Nazis blamed the Jews for many things, including defeat in World War I, economic collapse and high levels of unemployment after the 1920s, and accused 'the government of succumbing to domination from an Internationalist Jewish conspiracy' (Levi, 2001: 39). Such propaganda helped the Nazis gain credibility in that they were increasingly committed to the elimination of Jews as a solution to pressing economic and social problems. Removal or silencing of such musicians would ensure the preservation of these values (Levi, 2001: 39).

The identification of and vigilance against what the Nazis perceived to be a cultural threat was thus a central concern for the Nazis, pervading all aspects of cultural policy. Amongst its widely disseminated manifestations was the *Entartete Musik* (Degenerate Music) Exhibition that took place in Düsseldorf in May 1938. Spearheaded by Nazi ideologue Hans Severus Ziegler with the objective of demonstrating the supposed 'degenerate' influence on German musical life by what he called 'Jewish Cultural Bolshevism'. In the catalogue of *Entartete Kunst,* Hitler himself was quoted as referring to the insidious reach of this 'Bolshevist' movement: 'the Jews understood, especially through the exploitation of their place in the press, with help from the so-called critics, not only how to confuse step by step the natural conceptions (*natürliche Auffassungen*) about the essence and the lessons of art as well as the purpose, but moreover to destroy the common healthy perceptions in these matters'.[1]

Long before this exhibition on 22 September 1933, the Nazis had officially opened the *Reichskulturkammer*[2] (RKK) under Joseph Goebbels. Overall, Goebbels's RKK consisted of seven subdivisions, represented by the artistic disciplines of theatre,

[1] Translation from page 26 of the *Entartete Kunst* catalogue available on http://lcc.onlineculture.co.uk/ttp/ttp.html?id=1bdcb351-e431-45a2-8fa7-4fa343bdc27f&type=book [Accessed 17 June 2020].
[2] 'Reich Chamber of Culture'.

visual arts, film, literature, journalism, and radio. The RKK division devoted to music was called the *Reichsmusikkammer*[3] (RMK), initially with Richard Strauss as its president. The RMK was set up to coordinate all elements of the music industry and it had sub-departments for many different areas including composition, soloists, copyright, provision of teaching exams and qualifications, orchestras and finance. It also set wages for musicians and provided a pension scheme. Another more political function of the RMK was to organise 'good German music' – composed by Aryans and seen as consistent with Nazi ideals, while at the same time attempting to coordinate the suppression of 'degenerate' music, which included modernism in its largely atonal and dodecaphonic guises, jazz and music by Jewish composers (Haas, 2014: 23). So, while the formation of the *Reichsmusikkammer* offered structural and organizational change – possibly, in the view of some musicians, improvement – to what had been the chaotic musical life of Weimar Germany, it had deliberately dire effects in terms of personnel. Musicians had to provide proof of Aryan descendants to be able to join: this had the effect of excluding hugely influential Jewish musicians and intellectuals from German musical life (Potter 2001).

[3] Reich Chamber of Musical Affairs.

Chapter Two – The Situation in the Netherlands

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries leading up to the German occupation in 1940 marked a time when Dutch composers, including Gokkes, were beginning to re-establish a tradition of art music in the Netherlands. This was arguably the first musical flourishing since the Renaissance (approximately 1400 to 1600), during which time the Netherlands, encompassing modern-day Belgium and Luxembourg, produced many influential composers of sacred music such as Guillaume Dufay (1397–1474), Josquin des Prez (c. 1450–1521), and Orlande de Lassus (1532–1594). (Elders, 1991: 9). As considered below, the main catalyst for this more recent music-cultural resurgence was prompted by the formation of the Royal Conservatory of The Hague in 1826, the Amsterdam Conservatory in 1884, and the building of the Concertgebouw and formation of the Concertgebouw Orchestra in 1888, which the invitations of conductor Willem Mengelberg led to many eminent composers such as Mahler, Richard Strauss, and Debussy conducting their own works there. Consequently, much of the Dutch music of that time, up to the German invasion, was influenced by both the German romantic tradition and so-called French 'Impressionism' – although several Dutch composers including Gokkes would discard the German tradition in preference for the French, probably as a protest against German musical dominance in Europe after their actions in World War I (Alders and Pameijer, 2015: 10).

After 1888, the establishment of the Concertgebouw generated a newly found 'self-confidence in the field of composition' (Wouters, 1965: 97), and one influential Dutch composer to emerge as a result of this at the end of the nineteenth century was Alphons Diepenbrock (1862-1921), whose music displayed many of the Germanic and French traits that were popular at that time. The flourishing musical environment that Diepenbrock was part of went on to inspire the generation of composers that followed, and one very significant composer to emerge in the early part of the twentieth century was Sem Dresden (1881-1957). Dresden was an important figure because of his role as a teacher, and he would go on to teach a generation of successful younger, including Dutch-Jewish composers such as Leo Smit, Rosy

Wertheim and Sim Gokkes, all of whom made a significant impact in the period between 1920 and 1940.

However, this musical momentum was to be cut short when the Dutch army surrendered to Germany after the bombing of Rotterdam on 14 May 1940. The occupied Netherlands was subsequently headed by a National Socialist civilian government whose head (Reich Commissar), the Austrian lawyer and Nazi Arthur Seyss-Inquart, was personally appointed by Hitler. This civilian government or Reichskommissariat Niederlande, supervised the Dutch civil service, an arrangement which would ultimately prove fateful for Sim Gokkes and the rest of the Jewish population (Presser, 2010: 11).

As with the German Civil Service law of 1933, Jews were banned from working for the Dutch civil service. The first time this came to anyone's attention was in a report in a German newspaper titled *Deutsche Zeitung in den Niederlanden* published on 4 October 1940. The report mentioned the proposed disqualification of Jews in a short article announcing that 'Public Services [were] to dispense with Jews and people of mixed blood'. The article's sub-heading however read: 'No new posts or promotion' (Presser, 2010: 19), and this possibly gave Jewish employees a false sense of optimism, as there was no apparent mention of current Jewish employees being dismissed from their employment. However, further clarification of Nazi intentions came in the form of Aryan attestation as a requirement for civil service work, and, in January 1941, as well as Jews then being required to register the assets of their business enterprises, and compulsory registration of *all* Jewish persons including 'full Jews, half-Jews, quarter-Jews, Orthodox or not' (Presser, 2010: 35). Registration served the purpose of differentiating Jews from the non-Jewish population, and failure to register was dealt with harshly, with either imprisonment or confiscation of property. A total of 159,806 persons registered, including 19,561 persons born of mixed marriages. The total included some 25,000 Jewish refugees from the German Reich (Presser, 2010: 35-36).

Unlike in Germany, there was no *Entartete Kunst* or *Entartete Musik* exhibition in the Netherlands after the Nazi occupation of 1940, but still, as in Germany, there was clear persecution of cultural and musical figures using the accusation of

'degeneracy'. Others were treated more favourably. The Nazi-driven establishment of the Departement van Volksvoorlichting en Kunsten (DVK)[4] in 1940 enabled control over both the media and arts and provided the opportunity to reorganise and promote cultural life in the Netherlands. Regarding the media, from September 1940 all newspapers were subjected to German censorship, and all Jewish newspapers banned and replaced by one publication, *Het Joodse Weekblad* (*The Jewish Weekly*) which was the official voice of the Jewish Council. This published, among other things, the decrees issued by the occupying forces against the Jews, and so was in line with the Germans' efforts to isolate the Jews (Rutland, 2001: 529). The reorganisation of music was instigated by the DVK's head of music, Jan Goverts-Govert who was a great admirer of the *Reichsmusikkammer* and used this as a model in his mission to secure increased state funding 'to improve the welfare of professional musicians in the Netherlands' (van Gammeren, 2019: 126). Most of this increased funding went to the subsidised orchestras, but in order to qualify for this funding there was a stipulation that their concert programmes should include between 20-30% of music by Dutch composers, a stipulation that mirrored the promotion of native talent that was earlier pioneered in Nazi Germany. Subsequently, in order to have enough repertoire available to meet these quotas and promote Dutch music there were state prizes and commissions available for new compositions, creating an opportunity for non-Jewish composers to establish themselves and promote their music. However, this also had the effect of providing the opportunity to culturally exclude Dutch-Jewish composers whose works would have been considered undesirable by the authorities (van Gammeren, 2019: 126).

A probable reason for these actions in promoting music of non-Jewish Dutch composers has been offered by Belgian scholar Jeroen Dewulf's ideas on German attitudes towards the Netherlands before and during the occupation. He points out that 'there is plenty of evidence that forces within the National Socialist Party wished to re-educate what they considered their "Dutch kinsmen" to enable them to rediscover their "truly Germanic" and essentially German identity' (Dewulf, 2010: 45). The Germans also saw the Netherlands 'from a geographical point of view as a natural extension of Germany' (Dewulf, 2010: 45) and were keen to maintain the

[4] Department for Public Information and Arts.

country's industrial importance and capacity because of its ports, trading connections, and location. The appointed *Reichskommissar* of the occupied Netherlands, Seyss-Inquart, believed that one of the most effective ways of developing and maintaining a harmonious relationship between the Netherlands and Germany was through culture, and the promotion of acceptable Dutch music was one means of achieving this objective.

Although the free promotion and encouragement of Dutch composers was an attempt to unify Germany and the Netherlands, the Reichskommissariat Niederlande, under directions from Germany, did also however try specifically to 'nazify' Dutch musical life through their policy of ideological *Gleichschaltung* (enforced conformity). This process included the setting up of the Nederlandsche Organisatie van Kunstenaars [5] (NOK) in an attempt to unite Dutch composers under the National Socialist umbrella. There already existed an organisation in the form of the Genootschap van Nederlandsche Componisten[6] (GeNeCo) which promoted Dutch music, ensured professional competence amongst composers and looked after their welfare, as well as creating another agency responsible for dealing with copyright issues.

However, it was compulsory for composers to join the newly formed organisation and consequently, the already existing GeNeCo had to merge with NOK. In 1941 NOK then became part of the Nederlandsche Kultuurkammer[7] (NKK), akin to the German *Reichskulturkammer,* and an artist had to be affiliated if 'he wanted to have the opportunity to work, and in the case of composers and musicians, to be able to obtain commissions and performance opportunities' (Overbeeke, 2004: 148). Part of this nazification of Dutch musical life also meant having to accept Nazi politics. Membership and the signing of an Aryan declaration was compulsory for anyone working in the cultural sector and nothing could be performed, published, or staged without the permission of the organisation. Several composers such as the non-Jewish Jan van Gilse, Hendrik Andriessen, and Peter van Anrooy were resistant to what they saw as the attempted Nazification of Dutch music because 'signing the

[5] Dutch Organisation of Artists.
[6] Society of Dutch Composers.
[7] Dutch Chamber of Culture.

Aryan declaration meant that people agreed to the politics of the Nazis and thus the destruction of the Jews' (Overbeeke, 2004: 148). They were later persecuted as a result, while others cut their losses and became members. The choice between unemployment and a comfortable life was quickly made and was a sinister preview of what was to come with the requirement of Aryan declaration and the resulting exclusion of Jewish composers including the subject of this research, Sim Gokkes. Non-Jewish composers who were compliant were dealt with less harshly by the Nazis than in neighbouring Germany: their music wasn't singled out as being 'degenerate' merely because of the compositional styles that they used. In fact, the Dutch composers Matthijs Vermeulen (1888-1967) and Daniel Ruyneman (1886-1963) both employed modernist and experimental techniques and were allowed to continue their work unhindered by Nazi intervention. Historically, newly composed art-music in Germany enjoyed a much higher status in musical life than in the Netherlands, and composers in Germany were subsequently far more respected. This difference in status meant that 'the battle over the direction of music in the Netherlands was much less fierce than in neighbouring Germany, and for that reason composers who showed themselves to be receptive towards everything the Nazis did not consider acceptable, were treated less harshly' (Overbeeke, 2004: 149). This would partly explain why some Dutch composers were not persecuted for their style of composing as in other neighbouring countries.

One of the Dutch composers who benefitted from membership of the NKK was Alexander Voormolen who received a government backed assignment which resulted in the composition of a string quartet. This work was not only performed in the Netherlands, but also premiered by the Zepparoni quartet in the Beethoven Hall of the Konzerthaus in Berlin on Wednesday 21 October 1942. According to reviews in *De Tijd* (20 November 1942) and later in the *Haagsche courant* (18 January 1943) Voormolen's music was received enthusiastically by the German audience, so much so that by popular demand it was added to a subsequent programme and included in other performances across Germany. The fact that it was premiered in Berlin is significant as it would have played a role in the Nazi propaganda machine in its attempts to present a positive representation of Nazi cultural policy in its occupied territories. For his musical contributions to the NKK Voormolen consequently

received an annual fee for his ‘unique contribution to Dutch musical life’ (Overbeeke, 2004: 149).

Of the non-Jews who resisted and were consequently persecuted, Jan van Gilse (1881-1944) was so disgusted with the Nazi regime that in his capacity as chairman of GeNeCo he tried to prevent the organisation from having to amalgamate with the NOK. He attempted this by liaising with other artists from a variety of backgrounds and being instrumental in the compiling and signing of a letter which was addressed directly to the Reichskommissar, Seyss-Inquart. Over 2,000 signatures were collected and added to the letter which expressed their concerns regarding the formation of the NOK. A section of the letter stated that ‘they [the signatories] take this liberty to bring to your attention that the idea on which this Culture Chamber is based, and its manner of organisation, conflict with the essence of artistry as they experience it as part of the Dutch tradition which has been conceived and respected for centuries. Entry into the institution in question, whereby the arts are subordinated to predetermined political principles, whose artistic existence is regulated by authoritarian leaders, and where admission or non-admission is not dependent solely on the standard of artistry, is not spiritually conducive with life as an artist’ (Samama, 2006: 192). This letter was interpreted as an act of resistance in the eyes of the Nazis, and the next day several arrests were made while van Gilse went into hiding. Also, in another act of resistance, at a concert van Gilse was conducting with the Concertgebouw orchestra he ‘refused […] to modify a programme with, among other things, his own work’ (Overbeeke, 2004: 151) due to the fact that they had removed Jewish members from the orchestra. Consequently, it was then forbidden to perform his works.

After the requirement in 1941 for all Dutch composers to sign the Aryan declaration, the music of Jewish composers would be banned from the repertoire whatever political views they held, and whatever style of music they composed. As the van Gilse example shows, several non-Jewish composers were also banned because of actions that were interpreted by the Nazi regime as acts of resistance (Alders and Pameijer, 2015: 12). The list of both Jewish and non-Jewish composers based in the Netherlands whose music was forbidden is extensive and includes Sim Gokkes. Others on the list were: Daniel Belifante, Johanna Bordewijk-Roepman, Henriëtte

Bosmans, Fania Chapiro, Lex van Delden, Sem Dresden, Marius Flothuis, Géza Frid, Jan van Gilse, Bob Hanf, Paul Hermann, Julius Hijman, Mischa Hillesum, Dick Kattenburg, Leo Kok, Hans Krieg, Hans Lachman, Bertus van Lier, Ignace Lillien, Israel Olman, Wilhelm Rettich, Nico Richter, Andries de Rosa, Samuel Schuijer, Paul Seelig, Leo Smit, Theo Smit Sibinga, Martin Spanjaard, Zoltán Székely, Marjo Tal, Max Vredenburg, Franz Weisz, and Rosy Wertheim (Forbidden Music Regained, 2017). Their music was forbidden by the Nazi regime, leaving a large void in the musical development of the Netherlands, and much of it is now forgotten. However, it should be noted that within the overall picture, these composers constituted a small percentage of the Jewish population in the Netherlands and many more would suffer at the hands of the Nazis. What many of them were to endure in the near future would be unthinkable. Some of the composers in the above list who died as a result of Nazi persecution will be looked at in more detail in the Appendix at the end of this thesis.

Elsewhere, outside of the music world, the situation in the Netherlands had escalated with the arrests of several hundred Jews who were transported to the Buchenwald and Mauthausen concentration camps. This, in turn, prompted a general strike by Dutch workers on February 25, 1941, which was suppressed by the Nazis who 'ordered the arrest of 425 Jews […]. Of these, 379 were finally transported to Mauthausen concentration camp. There were two survivors' (Lock, 1981: 102). The German and Dutch authorities separated Jews from the general Dutch population and imprisoned 15,000 Jews in forced-labour camps. The Germans then ordered the concentration of Jews in Amsterdam and sent foreign and stateless Jews to Westerbork[8] in the northeast of the Netherlands. From April 29, 1942, all Jews were required to wear a yellow Star of David on their clothing.

Deportations of Jews from the Netherlands began in the summer of 1942. The last train left Westerbork for Auschwitz on September 3, 1944. During these two years, the Nazis sent some 107,000 Jews to concentration camps such as Auschwitz and Sobibor, where most were to be murdered. Only 5,200 survived. In addition, 25,000-30,000 Jews went into hiding, assisted by the Dutch resistance. Approximately 66%

[8] A transit camp in the Netherlands from where prisoners were deported to various concentration camps.

of the Dutch Jews who went into hiding managed to survive. Sim Gokkes and most of his family did not survive (USHMN, 2018).

Chapter Three – Musical Developments in the Netherlands

As has already been mentioned, Gokkes and the other Dutch-Jewish composers of the early twentieth century can be seen as part of a significant resurgence of musical creativity in the Netherlands during the first part of the twentieth century, but for a long period prior to this there was very little meaningful musical activity there. In the early nineteenth century, there were few Dutch composers working in the Western art-music tradition, and practically no high-quality professional orchestras available to perform such music. There may have been many justifiable reasons for this absence of any form of musical tradition in the Netherlands – chiefly, a lack of Romantic music-national outpouring linked to an absence of strong national identity – an opinion echoed by an anonymous Dutch critic who in 1819 wrote an article in the Dutch journal *Amphion*: 'We Dutch have no music of our own. Hard as I find it to make this confession, it is none the less based on the truth'. (Reeser, 1986: 10). However, in the earlier part of the nineteenth century, efforts were already underway that would rectify this state of affairs with a drive to give greater importance to the field of music education. Hymn and Psalm-singing were introduced as compulsory in schools, and in 1826 the establishment of the music conservatoires in the Hague, 1829 in Rotterdam, and 1862 in Amsterdam, had a great influence on music education in general (Reeser, 1986: 14).

By the very end of the nineteenth-century, inroads were being made into making musical life in the Netherlands prosper as it had done many centuries earlier. This arguably began to happen in earnest in about 1880, and one of the most significant events here was the foundation of the Concertgebouw and Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam in 1888. Throughout the nineteenth century it was felt by some that up to that point, the national decline of musical standards in the Netherlands was due to 'inattentive listening, undisciplined orchestras and a lack of compositional talent' (Cressman, 2014: 151). In 1881 G.C.C.W. Hayward, who had an interest in architecture and acoustics, wrote an article in the newspaper *De Amsterdammer* explaining that one way to rectify the issue would be through 'a serious attempt to build a temple dedicated to musical performances' (Cressman, 2014: 143). Hayward saw the musical problem as more of a material problem, and that the construction of a new concert hall, like those in most other major cities

across Europe, would be the solution. The Amsterdam bourgeoisie of the time took notice of such arguments and took it upon themselves to organise and fund a new concert hall in the city. However, to argue that a new concert hall and orchestra would instantly solve the musical issues of the Netherlands was too simplistic: Hayward seemingly did not consider the wider picture, in which the ongoing development of music education in schools and conservatories would ultimately help to slowly re-establish a musical tradition in the Netherlands leading up to the establishment of the Concertgebouw. Also, the desire to overcome the sense of provincialism in Dutch musical life was undoubtedly stimulated by landmark performances from external musical institutions such as those given in 1885 by Hans von Bülow and the Meininger Hofkapelle in The Hague, Rotterdam and Amsterdam. The professionalism of the German orchestra impressed Amsterdam's bourgeoisie and, more importantly, proved an inspiration for the Amsterdam musicians, who used it as a model for their own new first professional orchestra which was to be housed in a purpose-built hall, the Concertgebouw (Cressman, 2012:197).

The Concertgebouw Orchestra had originally wanted Brahms to be its conductor, but on his refusal, a Dutch conductor, Willem Kes (1856 – 1934), was appointed. Kes played an important role in creating a disciplined environment within the orchestra itself: 'they were fined for arriving late, and if they did not know their parts, they were forced to stay after rehearsals and practise in the conductor's room' (Post, 2009: 21), and also in re-educating Dutch audiences who were now encouraged to sit in complete silence and to listen attentively, to be seated before the start, and to stay until the very end of the performance (Post, 2009: 22). Moreover, not only did Kes make changes with the musicians and the audience, but he also made a significant innovation with regard to programming: instead of the mainstay of early romantic German composers such as Mendelssohn and Schumann, he introduced works by more contemporary composers into the repertoire – such as in 1891 when he performed Richard Strauss's *Don Juan* in the Netherlands for the first time. In 1893 he devoted an entire concert programme to contemporary French orchestral music: Chabrier (*Joyeuse marche*), Chausson (*Viviane*, op. 5), Franck (*Le chasseur maudit*), d'Indy (*Wallenstein*, op. 12), and Lalo (*Rapsodie norvégienne*).[9] Also, in

[9] Concertgebouworkest archives. Programme of a concert given by the Concertgebouw Orchestra, 16 February 1893. Available at http://archief.concertgebouworkest.nl/en/archive/search/ [Accessed 20 November 2020]

1895 he was responsible for the first performance in the Netherlands! of Dvorak's *New World* Symphony.

By 1895, under the baton of Willem Mengelberg (1871 – 1951), the orchestra had grown into a formidable and professional ensemble that was able to tackle the most challenging of repertoire of that time (Reeser, 1986: 138). Leo Samama writes that 'under [Mengelberg's] inspired and disciplined guidance, the orchestra of the Concertgebouw […] became a world-class ensemble within a decade, with a repertoire that bore witness to courage and insight' (Samama, 1995: 17). Both Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw Orchestra were very highly regarded by many high-profile composers, and Mengelberg was not averse to inviting many of these composers to appear as guest conductors with the orchestra, some of whom would conduct their own works. These included Richard Strauss, Charles Villiers Stanford, Gustav Mahler, Ferruccio Busoni, Georg Schumann, Hans Pfitzner, Max Schillings, George Enescu, Arnold Schoenberg, Claude Debussy, and Max Reger (Reeser, 1986: 141). The number of German names in the list hints at the continued dominance of German music in concert programmes at that time, but it should be noted that Mengelberg also pioneered non-German music and ensured that the audiences in the Netherlands were familiar with the compositions of composers such as Paul Dukas, Claude Debussy, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Alexander Scriabin, and Jean Sibelius (Reeser, 1986: 142). This new musical impetus would not only influence the listening habits of the concert-going public but importantly would provide a wide array of stylistic influences and a legacy for composers in the Netherlands including Sim Gokkes and a new generation of Dutch-Jewish composers in years to come.

Towards the same end, it is important to look at the musical landscape shaped by Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw Orchestra, as the public exposure of several high-profile composers would to some extent prove to have a wide-ranging influence on the continuing development of Dutch music throughout the early twentieth century. One such hugely influential figure was Gustav Mahler, who for the first time agreed to conduct the world premiere of his Third Symphony with them in 1902 at the 38th Composer Festival of the General German Society for Music (Allgemeiner

Deutscher Musikverein) in Crefeld, Germany. He had never heard the Concertgebouw Orchestra perform but agreed due to the recommendation made by the chairman of the society, Richard Strauss. Unfortunately, the Concertgebouw was unable to commit to the festival and the invitation was given elsewhere. Mengelberg attended the subsequent performance and was highly impressed, to the extent that he invited Mahler to perform the piece in the Concertgebouw in their 1903-04 concert season; an invitation which Mahler accepted (Post, 2009: 26). As part of this concert season in October 1903, Mahler conducted the Concertgebouw Orchestra in a performance of his own First Symphony. The critics and audience were very impressed, and a review of the concert by critic Dan. de Lang gushed with praise: 'One cannot speak with enough praise about the performance and about Mahler's talent as a conductor. Everything at a virtuoso level. As a conductor, these qualities benefit him in every way. It was such a luxury to hear such an orchestra under such guidance. The artist was enthusiastically welcomed by the audience. Everyone realized that they were faced with an artist of extraordinary gifts' (De Lange, 27 October 1903: 9).

Mahler enjoyed great success in Amsterdam even though the performance of his music was to later become forbidden in the Netherlands during the German occupation. The Dutch media from 1903 to 1940 was generally indifferent to Mahler being Jewish, and there was outrage when a book entitled *Das musikalische Juden A.B.C*. by Christa Maria Rock and Hans Brückner was published in Germany in 1935. 'It was an alphabetical list of composers and other musicians, whose spirit or works are considered to be disadvantageous for German music life, thus the following is found on page 178 of the list of names: Mengelberg, Josef Willem, born 1871 in Utrecht, conductor in Amsterdam, and friend of the Jew Gustav Mahler' (*Eindhovensch dagblad*, 16 November 1935: 6). However, even in what were traditionally liberal Dutch newspapers some reporters demonstrated what can be considered to be underlying antisemitism towards Mahler. On 26 October 1903 in *De nieuwe courant,* Barend Kwast reviewed a concert at the Concertgebouw where Mahler conducted his own First Symphony. Kwast initially offered warm praise for Mahler's conducting skills, but he could not 'testify to the creative powers of this genius' (Kwast, 26 October 1903: 1). He then continued the review by subtly alluding to some of the antisemitic rhetoric from Wagner's controversial pamphlet *Judaism in*

Music, in which, although he didn't directly mention Mahler's Jewish background, Kwast suggested that Mahler was incapable of drawing artistic inspiration from nature, and that his music sounded like he was struggling to produce something that was artistically and emotionally more profound and soul-searching. It is interesting that Kwast would appear to have been familiar with Wagner's thoughts as similar opinions can be observed in other newspapers during the Occupation. From 1940 antisemitism in the Netherlands was more blatant, with Nazi control and censorship of all Dutch newspapers. The Dutch SS newspaper *Storm SS* again mirrored some of Wagner's opinions where one of its writers criticised Mahler's musical oeuvre as 'shallow and artificial in its attempt to assimilate Germanic spirit and is proof that that spirit can never be felt in its purest form by a Jew' (*Storm SS Blad der Nederlandsche SS*, 30 January 1942: 9).

However enthusiastically Mahler and his music were generally received before the German occupation, during the years leading up to it the amount of music by Dutch composers included in concert programmes was variable, with Mengelberg at times arguably doing little to redress that balance with the Concertgebouw Orchestra. In 1930 there were only eight performances that included any Dutch music, but in 1937 there were twenty-eight performances. 18 November 1937 was a significant date in the Concertgebouw's calendar in that it was the only concert conducted by Mengelberg that consisted solely of music by Dutch composers. The programme consisted of Henk Bading's *Symphonische variaties over een Zuid-Afrikaans thema*, Johan Wagenaar's *Feestmarsch*, Alphons Diepenbrock's *Vondels vaart naar Agrippine*, Cornelis Dopper's *Lucifer*, Rudolf Mengelberg's *Hymne op Amstelredam*, Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck's *Fantasia chromatica*, and Bernard Zweers's *Gysbreght van Aemstel*.[10] After 1937 the inclusion of new Dutch music tailed off slightly, and what was performed was mostly repertoire that had been included throughout most of that decade. On April 7, 1941, the DVK presented an information session where they outlined what would amount to government interference in Dutch musical life. It was at this point that musicians benefitted from better salaries and working

[10] Concertgebouworkest archives. Programme of a concert given by the Concertgebouw Orchestra, 18 November 1937. Available at http://archief.concertgebouworkest.nl/en/archive/search/ [Accessed 23 November 2020]

conditions, but also witnessed the ‘purification of the orchestras’ (Zwart, 2020: 950) with the expulsion of Jewish members. Part of the political agenda was also the promotion of Dutch composers and in 1941 there was a notable increase in the frequency of their inclusion in concert programmes. However, my research into Dutch newspaper archives from this period makes it clear that the most popular inclusions that were embraced by audiences in concerts up to the Occupation were the music of German and Austrian composers: Mahler, Richard Strauss, along with Brahms and Beethoven, although performance of Mahler’s music would later become forbidden after October 26, 1940.

Not all such music was embraced by audiences however, and this was the case when Schoenberg visited Amsterdam. When Schoenberg conducted the Concertgebouw performing his early compositions *Pelleas und Melisande, Verklärte Nacht* and the *Fünf Orchesterstücke Op. 16* in 1921, the public remained lukewarm (Samama, 2006: 25-26). This opinion was reflected in a concert review by Theo van der Bijl who thought that ‘the leap that Schoenberg suddenly makes from the influences of Wagner and Mahler to the string sextet Verklärte Nacht) and orchestral pieces seems to escape the laws of evolution. But let us simply accept this as a riddle and believe that the sounds of these works truly live on in Schonberg’s spirit; we can probably get used to it, but they will never leave us with the impression of beauty, at most they can be thought of as being interesting specimens of small orchestral experiments’ (Van der Bijl, 22 March 1921: 2). That review may very well have been typical of general contemporary opinion, but it did not deter many young, up-and-coming composers in Amsterdam who took notice of the very different styles of music that were being performed to the very highest standards by the Concertgebouw Orchestra. Despite his musical reputation, Schoenberg was still influential in the Netherlands and his modernist, in some cases dodecaphonic, style can be heard in the musical styles of several Dutch composers of that time such as Nico Richter (1915 – 1945), and later Louis Andriessen (1939 -).

One of the biggest influences on Dutch music in the early twentieth century, and on Gokkes in particular, was the music of Claude Debussy. Most Dutch composers in the late nineteenth century studied in Germany, with many of the students in the

conservatories being trained in the German romantic tradition. The beginning of the twentieth century began to see a wider diversity of styles, with more and more composers in the Netherlands turning to Paris for inspiration, particularly after World War I when many arguably made a political statement by shunning what had previously been a dominant Germanic influence on music culture (Brokken, 2015: 10). Debussy appeared as both conductor and soloist of his own works at the Concertgebouw on 1 March 1914. His appearance aroused a huge amount of enthusiasm amongst the Dutch audiences and orchestra members alike, possibly due to the perception that his music was approachable and accessible. As he took to the stage, 'the orchestra and audience rose as one man' (Reeser, 1986: 225) and afforded Debussy a standing ovation even before the performance had begun. Not even favourites like Mahler and Strauss had been given that sort of reception upon taking to the stage. M.V. van der Valk of the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* wrote that 'the loud cheers for Debussy would not stop. Repeatedly, he had to undertake the long journey across the stage accompanied by the spontaneous roaring of the audience. This bore no resemblance to normal courteous applause. It only ceased after Debussy had left the stage for good. Outside the artist's exit, many people stood long after the concert had finished in order to await Debussy's arrival and to once again be able to give him an ovation when he left the building. Amsterdam once again honoured a great man in a grand way' (Van der Valk, 2 March 1914: 9).

By this time, the Dutch audiences were very familiar with Debussy's later music. Mengelberg had introduced Debussy's *Prelude a l'Aprés-Midi du Faune* to the Concertgebouw in 1904, ten years after it was written, followed by *La Mer in* 1910, and three *Nocturnes* in 1911. Many of Debussy's works were a regular part of Mengelberg's repertoire and obviously proved to be immensely popular with Dutch concertgoers, and more significantly with Dutch composers such as Gokkes, many of whom embraced Debussy's style of writing. Consequently, this style would become a major influence in the Netherlands before the Occupation.

Stylistically, Debussy was occasionally influenced by Javanese Gamelan music with its instrumental colouring and use of non-western scales. As Java was a Dutch colony during the nineteenth century it is possible that Debussy's orientalisms may very well have contributed to his popularity with Dutch audiences and musicians. In

fact, Gamelan music was frequently performed on Dutch media with regular radio concerts and was part of a thriving 'Indonesian performing arts "scene" in the Netherlands [which ran from] the late colonial period through [to] the end of World War Two (Cohen, 2014: 232). He was also influenced by the counterpoint of Palestrina which he felt was 'harmony created by melody' (Jensen, 2014: 147). Debussy's compositional style makes frequent use of parallel chords, chordal melodies, bitonality, the whole-tone scale, and the pentatonic scale, all of these stylistic traits being an acknowledgement of his attraction to non-western music and Palestrina's counterpoint. There are also references to jazz in some of his compositions, for example, the rhythmic, rag-time elements of *Golliwogg's Cakewalk* from *Children's Corner* written (1908). Some of these stylistic traits can consistently be found in many of Gokkes's secular compositions.

Significantly, one important composer influenced by Debussy's so-called 'Impressionistic' style was Sem Dresden, who, as a composition teacher at both the Amsterdam and Hague Conservatoires from 1917 to 1924, played a large role in the musical development of many Dutch composers. His composition classes were very well regarded, and some of the composers to graduate from his classes include Jacques Beers, Jan Felderhof, Cor de Groot, Marius Monnikendam, Jan Mul, Jan Nieland, Leo Smit, Rosy Wertheim and Sim Gokkes. Dresden's attraction to Debussy's music possibly accounts for the frequent references to Debussy's style in Gokkes's own works. In 1924, Dresden was appointed director of the Amsterdam Conservatory as the successor to Julius Röntgen (Van den Dungen, 2015: 68).

Sometime later at the Concertgebouw on November 8, 1926, Stravinsky conducted the premiere of the concert version (orchestral music without the ballet) of his own work *The Rite of Spring*. As a modern work, it was well-received in Amsterdam unlike during its initial run as a ballet in Paris, where the composer Puccini famously described it as 'the work of a madman. The public hissed, laughed – and applauded' (Puccini and Adami, 1974: 251). Although it took a long period of time for the work to become generally accepted throughout Europe, a survey of all available Dutch newspaper reviews confirms that the very first performance at the Concertgebouw, conducted by Pierre Monteux on 12 October 1924, was also regarded as a success. It was however arguably less so with audiences compared to the later 1926

performance conducted by Stravinsky. A critic for *De courant Het nieuws van den dag* wrote: 'it is remarkable to observe the attitude of the audience. After the first part, many people walked out in the afternoon. They did that when Mahler was first played here. But after the end, the many people present got up and gave the conductor and orchestra a hearty, stormy ovation. It is a work of unbelievable power and of significance for the further development of the world' (*De courant Het nieuws van den dag*, 14 October 1924: 6). Also, in reaction to the same performance, Paul F. Sanders echoed the fact that other critics were particularly impressed with Stravinsky's progressive methods and described him as 'an innovator of unprecedented strength and genius' (*Het volk*, 13 October 1924: 10).

The fact that Stravinsky visited Amsterdam in 1926, and that his works had been performed in the Netherlands since 1923 is significant with regards to understanding some of the musical language employed in Sim Gokkes's works. All, apart from one of Gokkes's only surviving manuscripts, date from between 1928 to 1939, the rest having been lost or destroyed. Much of this music clearly shows Stravinsky's influence. This would imply that Gokkes was exposed to and influenced by Stravinsky's music at the Concertgebouw some years after he graduated from the Amsterdam Conservatory in 1919. Stravinsky's potentially pervasive influence on Gokkes through the Concertgebouw performances can be substantiated by referring to the Concertgebouw concert archives which confirm that between 1923 and 1940, Stravinsky's music was included in one hundred and one of the orchestra's concert programmes, sixty-six of which were performed in Amsterdam. Gokkes would have been exposed to a large cross section of Stravinsky's musical oeuvre which amongst other works, included *Petrushka*, *The Firebird Suite*, *The Rite of Spring*, *Les noces*, *Pulcinella Suite*, *A Soldier's Tale*, the Violin Concerto in D major, the Octet, and *Oedipus Rex.*[11] It is impossible to make any stylistic assumptions about Stravinsky's possible influence in Gokkes's compositions before 1928 as they are no longer extant.

[11] Concertgebouworkest archives. Programme of a concerts that included the works of Stravinsky between 1923 and 1940. Available at http://archief.concertgebouworkest.nl/en/archive/search/ [Accessed 24 November 2020]

In all, these were fertile times in the musical life of the Netherlands. There was a world-class concert hall and orchestra at the Concertgebouw, an innovative conductor in Mengelberg, and famous, influential composers from elsewhere in Europe conducting their own compositions in front of a now more knowledgeable and accepting audience. In the period from 1903-1938 the notable composers who conducted their own works in Amsterdam for the first time included Richard Strauss (1903), Gustav Mahler (1903), George Enescu (1910), Carl Nielsen (1912), Arnold Schoenberg (1912), Claude Debussy (1914), Edward Elgar (1920), Maurice Ravel (1923), Igor Stravinsky (1924), Ottorino Respighi (1926), Zoltán Kodály (1927), Paul Hindemith (1935), and Darius Milhaud (1938). Richard Strauss had a special relationship with the Concertgebouw and appeared on thirteen occasions. This was the start of a new golden era for music in Holland, an era in which Gokkes made a significant contribution.

Part Two

The Life of Sim Gokkes

Introduction: The Jews in Amsterdam

And Israel shall dwell in safety.

Deuteronomy chapter 33, verse 28.

During the seventeenth century, Sim Gokkes's ancestors would have been Jewish refugees who left both the Iberian Peninsula and central and eastern Europe to avoid persecution. They migrated to other parts of Europe that were considered safe and more tolerant of Judaism. In 1615, Dutch Calvinist philosopher Hugo Grotius was asked by the state of Holland and West Friesland for his opinion on allowing a Jewish diaspora to enter the country. He advocated the right for Jews to settle in Holland, but 'that the number of Jews should be limited, they should be forced to listen to Christian sermons, and they should not be allowed to hold any public office, although their choice of profession should otherwise be largely open' (Brenner and Riemer, 2012: 124). Half a century later, attitudes had changed, and Jews were no longer excluded from the political and professional community and were also allowed to build their own synagogues. By 1640, Amsterdam had displaced Venice as the most politically and religious tolerant haven for the wealthy Sephardic and poorer Ashkenazi Jewish diaspora (Brenner and Riemer, 2012: 126). The Sephardim, in particular, became commercially important to the Dutch, and their international connections and knowledge of languages helped the city's economy to expand. It was the promise of financial aid from the wealthy Sephardic community that then enabled the Ashkenazim to be given permission to also settle in Amsterdam.

Judaism flourished and in 1670 permission was given to the Portuguese population to build a synagogue on the banks of the prestigious Herengracht Canal. The building of the Portuguese Synagogue was completed in 1675 and it was also known as the Esnoga or Snoge. This site united Amsterdam's Portuguese-Jewish community and became their main place of worship, allowing them to worship in public and openly practise their faith. It was here that Sim Gokkes would eventually become choral director of the resident choir Santo Servicio. The Ashkenazi community were able to build their synagogue, the Great Synagogue, in 1671 and this is where Gokkes would worship and receive part of his musical education from the cantor Victor Schlesinger.

Chapter Four – Sim Gokkes's Musical Education

Gokkes's musical education started at an early age, with music and singing tuition from Ben Geysel, a pianist and conductor who would prove to have a life-long influence on his young student (Moppes-Gokkes, 1995). Gokkes must have been a talented child as Geysel, or Geijsel as he was also known, was an eminent Dutch musician who was very well respected in the Netherlands, and even more so at a later stage during his time in Berlin. Geysel was born in Duivendrecht, Netherlands in 1885. He was the son of a sexton of a Catholic church and later married opera singer Fredrika Gestman in 1911. They were a very musical family, and one of their daughters, Cecilia Geysel, studied piano in Berlin with Jenny Kraus who was the daughter of Martin Kraus, a student of Franz Liszt. The family lived in The Hague for some time, and it was during this period that Geysel conducted a secular chorus known as *Liedertafel Zang en Vriendschap* (Liedertafel Singing and Friendship). This was a men's choir originally established to promote the *Liedertafel* style where the social aspect of informally meeting up was just as important as rehearsing the music. During his time in Duivendrecht Geysel also conducted the Christian men's choir there (Pos-Grimme, 2004: 6). This love of choral music must have had an effect on the young Gokkes, as his involvement in that particular medium played a prominent role in his musical life after this early education. In fact, in 1921 Gokkes himself founded and conducted De Amsterdamsche Korenschool (The Amsterdam Singing School), which like Geysel's *Liedertafel Zang en Vriendschap* choir, was not orientated towards Jewish membership, but promoted the idea of *Liedertafel* with its social focus, informal practice techniques and unpretentious singing style. This was an endeavour with which he gained much artistic success. Prior to this as a seventeen-year-old, he was already conductor of several choirs, had won first prize at a competition for male vocal quartets and also conducted a children's choir vacated by his next teacher Victor Schlesinger (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 17 December 1937: 5).

In 1925, Geysel performed as an accompanist for his wife in the great hall of the Concertgebouw, and also at the Groote Schouwburg which was a large theatre in Rotterdam built in 1887. While in Rotterdam he conducted the Rotterdam

Philharmonic Orchestra under the musical direction of Willem Feltzer. This illustrates that Geysel was a musician of some standing in the Netherlands and although it is not clear if he ever held an official teaching position, his work as a choral and operatic conductor would have undoubtedly presented opportunities to coach or teach talented youngsters such as Gokkes. It was when Geysel was musical director at the Dutch opera company *Pauwels en Kreeft* that he first noticed a talent in the then 10-year-old Gokkes, and consequently went on to voluntarily give Gokkes singing lessons free of charge (*Centraal blad voor Israëlieten in Nederland*, 2 December 1937: 3). Geysel's position with that particular opera company was significant, as when Gokkes graduated from the Amsterdam Conservatory in 1919, he shortly afterwards became second Kapellmeister for the same company. Geysel was certainly Kapellmeister during the period around 1921, a time when Gokkes would have taken up this appointment, and Geysel obviously held him in high enough regard in order to have recommended him for employment at the opera company (*Telegraaf*, 2 September 1921: 7). Assuming that they maintained contact after this period, Geysel's association with high profile performers, composers and conductors during his subsequent time with the Berliner Rundfunk and its orchestra may have served as yet another source of inspiration for Gokkes.

An example of this may have occurred around about 1925 when Gokkes was appointed conductor of *De Vereenigde Zangers* (The United Singers), once under the musical direction of eminent conductors Frederik Roeske and Hubert Cuypers. During this period, he celebrated magnificent triumphs and successfully resurrected some old, half-forgotten operas including *Les deux journées* by Luigi Cherubini. This was an *opéra comique* in three acts first performed on January 16, 1800, and although it became one of Cherubini's most popular works at that time, performances were rare in the twentieth century. It was finally performed by De Vereenigde Zangers in 1927, the same year as it was introduced into the repertoire of the Berlin State Opera (Roberts, 1927: 19). Ben Geysel at that same time was working as Kapellmeister and vocal coach at the Berliner Rundfunk, with responsibility for overseeing the operatic element of radio broadcasts. We can, therefore, assume that Gokkes adopted this opera under recommendation from Geysel in Berlin (Letzer, 1913: 57).

Although Geysel worked at the very highest professional levels, he always maintained his passion for promoting amateur choral work including male voice choirs and the *Liedertafel* style of singing. This was a theme continued by Gokkes with his formation of the Amsterdamsche Korenschool and the Velsens Mannenkoor in 1921, and the Jewish male choir Harpe Davids in 1925. This shared passion for choral work along with his resurrection of neglected operas would become a recurring feature throughout his career.

In 1926, Geysel and his family left the Netherlands for Berlin where he would reach the height of his fame during the 1920s and 1930s. There, he would meet and work with many high-profile composers and performers. During his time in Berlin, he was General Tonmeister of the Berliner Rundfunk, a radio service that championed modern composers of that time, and it was a position that he seemingly held at least until 1936, three years after the Nazis came to power. We know this as the Dutch newspaper *Het Vaderland* presented an article on 25 April 1936 describing the Dutch expatriates in Berlin taking part in a programme of events celebrating the birthday of Princess Juliana. Part of this programme included a performance by Catharina Gestman of Dutch songs composed by her husband Ben Geysel who was described as 'the Tonmeister of the Berliner Rundfunk' (*Het Vaderland*, 25 April 1936: 3). The role of General Tonmeister was very prestigious, as it required the incumbent to be both highly skilled as a musician and as a sound technician. The Berliner Rundfunk during Geysel's tenure was very much at the cutting edge of recording technology with the development of stereo sound and broadcasting techniques. Geysel was one of the station's first Tonmeister and was instrumental in developing various recording innovations including the development of the 'elektrischer Kapellmeister' (electric conductor) technique where the 'Reichspost official who controlled the microphone amplifier was given an "electric conductor" who understood the music and who, based on the score and the assignments given by the conductor, prompted the technician in good time before a fortissimo position began lower imperceptibly and, in the opposite case, raise it for longer pianissimo sections' (Goebel, 2007). For this purpose, the recording and the adjacent amplifier room had to be maintained from 1925 onwards through soundproof double glass panes.

In the station's yearbook *Die Funk-Stunde* of 1926, Geysel, along with Georg Széll are both mentioned as Kapellmeisters, with Geysel also in charge of opera and choral direction (Funk-Stunde, 1926: 5). As well as being the choral director he occasionally conducted the Berlin Radio Orchestra, and many contemporary composers willingly took on the role of guest conductor alongside Geysel, including Hindemith, Milhaud, Stravinsky, and Prokofiev. As shall be investigated later, it is interesting that Gokkes's works are tinged with the influence of some of these composers and raises the question as to whether Gokkes and Geysel were still maintaining communication during Geysel's time in Berlin.

The darker role of the Berliner Rundfunk was that it was also the national radio service that Joseph Goebbels used to broadcast many of his propaganda speeches, and this meant that as General Tonmeister after 1933, Geysel might well have been in general charge of such broadcasts. Although Geysel was not Jewish – he was a Catholic, and Kapellmeister at Sankt Matthias in Berlin – we can speculate that he must have felt uncomfortable with having such close contact with Goebbels and his rhetoric, even if, for the moment, he kept quiet so as to avoid attracting political attention. A video interview with his son Cantius Geysel suggests that 'Hitler's upcoming regime did not fit in with his [Ben Geysel's] thinking' (Geysel, 2010), and that before the outbreak of World War II he became increasingly outspoken about the terror of the Nazi regime (Geysel, 2010). We can also speculate that Ben Geysel did not harbour any staunch antisemitic views himself, as he had earlier worked with Gokkes, and later with the Jewish opera singer Joseph Schmidt, for whom Geysel was instrumental in his rise to fame (Völmecke, 2004: 17). Eventually, the Nazis became aware of Geysel's anti-Nazi political views and his name was put on a priority list for deportation to the concentration camps (Geysel, 2010). In 1937 Geysel found out about this, and along with his family, was able to escape back to safety in the Netherlands. However, due to the fact he was already on a deportation list, he and his family later had to go separately into hiding when the Germans invaded in 1940. It was after this period that he ended up in entertainment music and became composer and conductor with the *Bouwmeester Revue*, conductor of the Carré Orchestra and also composed music for films (Toondertijd, 2003).

Victor Schlesinger

Gokkes's second teacher and early musical influence was Victor Schlesinger (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 17 December 1937: 5) who was born in Nagy Tapolysami, Hungary in 1883. He died in Manchester, England as the result of a traffic accident in 1939. Schlesinger was cantor of the new Rapenburger Synagogue in Amsterdam from 1908 to 1923 and composed much liturgical music for use in services there. As Gokkes's teacher, he was responsible for motivating his passion for Jewish music at an early age, and by 1912, at the age of fifteen, Gokkes had composed his first work for the synagogue which was performed at the Rapenburger Synagogue in the same year. An article in the *Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad* of December 12, 1937, described Schlesinger's thoughts on Gokkes as a younger man as he gave tribute to him during his Silver Jubilee celebrations which marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of his compositional life: 'This young musician, Simon Gokkes, had made his first step in public on the beautiful, but often thorny path of art' (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 12 December 1937: 5) recalling a time when Gokkes was conducting his first choirs and on the pathway to becoming a very successful musician. Two years after paying tribute to his ex-student, Schlesinger had died.

As a child living in Nagy Tapolysami, Schlesinger visited the jesjiwa of the rabbi there and continued to do so until he was eighteen years of age. His musical talent was recognised at a young age having composed his first song when he was ten, after which his musical development continued rapidly until the age of eighteen. At this point in his life, he visited the famous jesjiwa in what is now Bratislava in Slovakia, where he studied Talmud with the rabbi there. Importantly, he also continued his musical studies and studies harmony and composition with Professor Wanderstab, and also piano and cello with Professor Van Hainanky, presumably in Hungary. After his studies, Schlesinger's first composition of any significance was a piece for male choir, violin, cello and piano, a German translation of the Hebrew lyrics *ngal naharoth bawel* by Meyad Tasa. When he was twenty-three, he went to Vienna and was appointed as cantor there, where he stayed until 1908 (de Jong, 1 December 1939: 5).

In 1908, Schlesinger saw an advert for the post of cantor at the newly built synagogue in Amsterdam. He was by then a very well-respected musician within Hungarian and Viennese Jewish musical circles, and his reputation must have expanded beyond those boundaries because when the vacancy for a cantor at the new Rapenburgerstraat Synagogue arose, people of the congregation were publicly urged to vote for his appointment. An advert in *Nieuw Israelietische weekblad* of February 14, 1908, proclaimed: 'Voters! We fully urge you to cast your vote for Mr Schlesinger. Why? We will tell you this: Mr Schlesinger has undeniably proved to be a cantor in the fullest sense of the word. He is a learned man, is exceptionally musically developed, an excellent composer and possesses a powerful, superfluous baritone voice' (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 14 February 1908: 4). He was duly appointed and remained as cantor there for the next fifteen years, during which time he taught Sim Gokkes. The community's opinion of him was very favourable: a 'finely-trimmed, orthodox, intelligent, and musical reader, who regularly captivated his listeners and made them feel the significance of the service' (de Jong, 1 December 1939: 5).

As well as the vocal and operatic influences of his first teacher Ben Geysel, then, Gokkes was clearly profoundly indebted to Schlesinger, in that much of Gokkes's work is heavily influenced by the music of the synagogue. This can be seen with his frequent references to the Torah, the use of musical motifs from existing synagogue music, and the use of modern harmonies, clearly demonstrating Schlesinger's influence as 'there was no better proponent [Schlesinger] in melding melodies, contrasting rhythms and modern harmonies to enliven age-old Jewish texts' (The Amsterdam Synagogue Choir, 2016). Several of Schlesinger's works have been recorded, including *Hasheim Malakh*[12] and *Mimekomekha.*[13]

It is also highly probable that Victor Schlesinger would have had a long-lasting connection with his ex-pupil Gokkes. After Schlesinger's death in 1939, another ex-pupil, S. Englander, wrote a touching obituary in the *Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad* of

[12] *Chazzanoet in vooroologs joods Amsterdam* (1997) [CD ROM]. The Choir of the Great Synagogue of Amsterdam. Available: Jewish Historical Museum of Amsterdam, JHM 9701

[13] *Kedushah* and other chants from the Amsterdam synagogue (1998) [CD ROM]. Available: Philips Classics, 468 098-2

December 1, 1939. In it, he wrote that it 'would not be complete if I did not also remember my first teacher, my unforgettable friend, my faithful counsellor, my paternal mentor. Neither time nor distance could affect the boundless interest with which he took note of the results of my work, the intimate affection with which he shared the joys and sorrows with me'. One can speculate that Gokkes held the same sentiments.

In 1923 Schlesinger left Amsterdam with his wife and two children and took up a post as first reader at the Higher Broughton Synagogue in Manchester where he remained for the next fifteen years. It is unclear why Schlesinger made this move, but he may very well have considered it an attractive prospect due to the large size of the Jewish community at that time. Victor Schlesinger died at his home in Manchester in 1938 at the age of 56. His death was the result of his falling off a bus as it rounded a bend, later resulting in heart failure. He was on his way to a tribunal at Manchester Town Hall, where he was to vouch on behalf of a Czech refugee; a role which he had taken on in his later years. It was in Czechoslovakia that he received his education, a country with which he felt an affinity (*Manchester Evening News*, 15 November 1939: 5).

Victor Schlesinger's cantorial work in the synagogue was at the time considered progressive as he was deeply influenced by the reformation to synagogue worship that had happened firstly in Germany and then Vienna during the nineteenth century. As a student of Schlesinger's, Gokkes absorbed these progressive influences into his early synagogue music, although it was a style of writing that he would later reject in favour of returning back to tradition and what he saw as the authenticity of traditional synagogue music. The actual beginnings of the reformation of Jewish worship had its roots in Germany in the early nineteenth century where it was decided that instead of using the old pre-nineteenth century methods of worship that had been passed down aurally through different generations, services needed modernisation. Synagogue music changed radically 'to make it appear more current and sophisticated to a public that was increasingly educated in Western art music' (Frühauf, 2015: 187). Occasionally there was the use of melodies taken from other sources with the addition of contemporary Western harmonies, and words changed or added to fit into the structure of Jewish worship. Very often these melodies were

taken from those used in the Protestant church, as the masses generally liked hearing the ‘singing of German chorales in the Protestant style, the mixed choir, and the organ,’ while also retaining ‘the hazzan and the traditional tunes’ (Idelsohn, 1992: 243). This sway towards the use of Western Christian style music and culture manifested during a lengthy process of Jewish emancipation across Europe which included efforts to integrate Jews within their societies. This recognition of Jewish civil and citizenship rights occurred during the late eighteenth century in France and the Netherlands, the mid nineteenth century in Great Britain and Central and Eastern Europe, and during the early twentieth century in Spain, Portugal, and Russia. Emancipation eventually contributed to assimilation, but also had the effect of some Jews moving away from their cultural heritage and fully immersing themselves into new cultures instead. This whole process may have contributed to the move away from the use of traditional and ancient Jewish music in the synagogue during the nineteenth century. Radical modernisation and a moving away from ancient tradition were the focal point of the reformation, and this meant that traditional melodies and motifs based on ancient modes such as the Pentateuch mode of the Ashkenazic communities, the mode of Ruth, the mode of the Prophets and the mode of Lamentations, all of which had specific roles in music for worship and had been used for over a thousand years, were now replaced. The main crossover point marking the start of these reforms occurred in the mid-nineteenth century, with several changes to the synagogue service instigated by the merchant Israel Jacobson (1768-1829). Jacobson eliminated the hazzanut and replaced it with the use of ‘Protestant hymns with Hebrew words, sermons in German, confirmation for boys and girls, and the reading, not cantillation of the Bible’ (Kligman, 2015: 94).

Ultimately, the radical reforms in Germany proved unsuccessful as the Judaic tradition was too deep-rooted. There was however still a desire for reform, but in a more moderate form, and this had its roots in Vienna, with the desired formation of high-quality musical content for worship purposes via the appointment of Salomon Sulzer as Obercantor of the Stadttempel Synagogue in 1826. These ideals would eventually be embraced around Europe, including by Victor Schlesinger in Amsterdam.

It is worth dwelling upon Sulzer's background and religious musical philosophy as it would later become the reason for a pivotal change in Gokkes's own thoughts on synagogue music. As a composer, Sulzer was very influential, even to the extent that Jewish music scholar Peter Gradenwitz argued that there should be the formation of a third Viennese School in addition to the two well-known ones: the school of Viennese Jewish music by Salomon Sulzer (Duffy, 2013: 29). This reformation was facilitated by the fact that Austria during the nineteenth century had become a more hospitable environment for the Jewish population, and it was at this time that Jewish reformers were able to begin to work in parallel with the Jewish Enlightenment movement that was in process across other parts of Europe. Reformers thought that as part of this process 'worship services should evolve to reflect Jews' new-founded immersion in secular society' (Duffy, 2013: 29). In Vienna, in the attempt to reform worship, the Jewish community recruited Rabbi Isaac Noah Mannheimer (1793-1865), who in turn recruited Sulzer to reform synagogue music.

However, Sulzer disagreed with the thinking of the reformists who were of the 'opinion that the regeneration of the service [could] be achieved only by a complete break with the past, by abolishing all traditional and inherited historically evolved liturgy' (Duffy, 2013: 30). Although congregations in Germany and Austria were incorporating a more Christian-style worship with a token German hymn placed at the start and the end of the synagogue service, Sulzer thought that there was still an important role for traditional Jewish chant 'and that it should be integrated into updated choral harmony' (Duffy, 2013: 29).
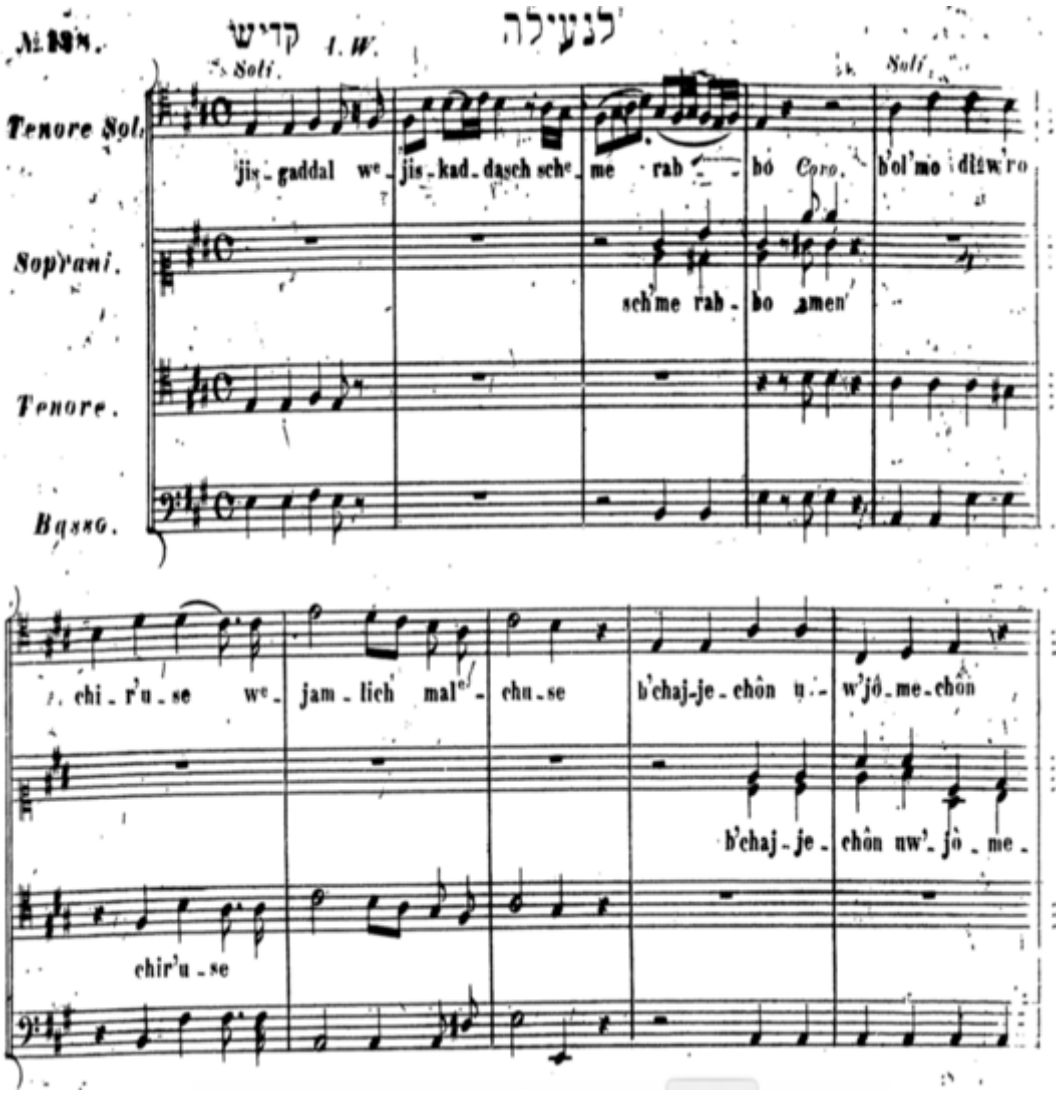
Part of the 'break from the past' meant that traditional synagogue music had been replaced by melodies and stylistic traits taken from other musical forms such as Baroque opera. Musically. Sulzer began his own musical reforms by taking traditional Ashkenazic melodies: he 'reinterpreted them by renouncing the coloraturas in the cantorial solo, and the imitation, absorption, or parody of late Baroque instrumental and operatic music, or dance melodies that had "pervaded" hazzanut' [14] (Frühauf, 2015: 190). He took these traditional Ashkenazic melodies

[14] Cantorial music.

and adapted them in his own way by utilising contemporary harmonic methods as used in Western art music, along with the introduction of major and minor tonality.

It would be fair to say that Sulzer composed a considerable amount of music, and by 1840 he had self-published his book of synagogue songs *Schir Zion* which included choral pieces and cantorial solos, utilising a mixture of traditional and newly composed melodies. In this collection, Sulzer was trying to balance his reforms evenly while adhering to certain traditions, not necessarily being totally innovative and re-creating everything, but re-shaping what was already in existence, hence aligning tradition with reform. He remained firmly within the limits of tradition by setting all of the texts in Hebrew but moved away from the traditional improvisatory and free rhythmic style used with these texts, something Gokkes would re-introduce into his own music at a later stage. Instead, Sulzer used regular meter, which was problematic in that it did not fit comfortably with the poetic rhythm of Hebrew. He moved away from tradition by eliminating excessive coloratura in his melodic lines, which in turn were influenced by contemporary secular and religious styles, and he harmonised them using the conventions of Western tonality. This had the effect of creating a shift away from traditional modality (Frühauf, 2015: 191), although modality was sometimes used in some of the recitatives. He kept the alternation between the cantor and the response of the congregation and choir but was strongly against allowing hazzanut to be improvised. Instead, Sulzer wanted everything that was to be sung by the hazzan to be written down and fixed (Idelsohn, 1992: 251-252).

Ex. 1 illustrates Sulzer's attempt at balancing tradition and reform with a reference to the past in the opening tenor solo written using the Mixolydian mode in a quasi-improvisatory style, albeit in a notated and strictly metered and measured format. The choral accompaniment is an example of reform, with the choral parts starting in unison in the tenor and bass lines, while in bar three there is what is clearly a use of Western harmonies in the form of alternating E major and B major chords. Very similar traits and features can be seen in Gokkes's earlier synagogue music, although he would later in his composing career become openly critical of Sulzer's work.
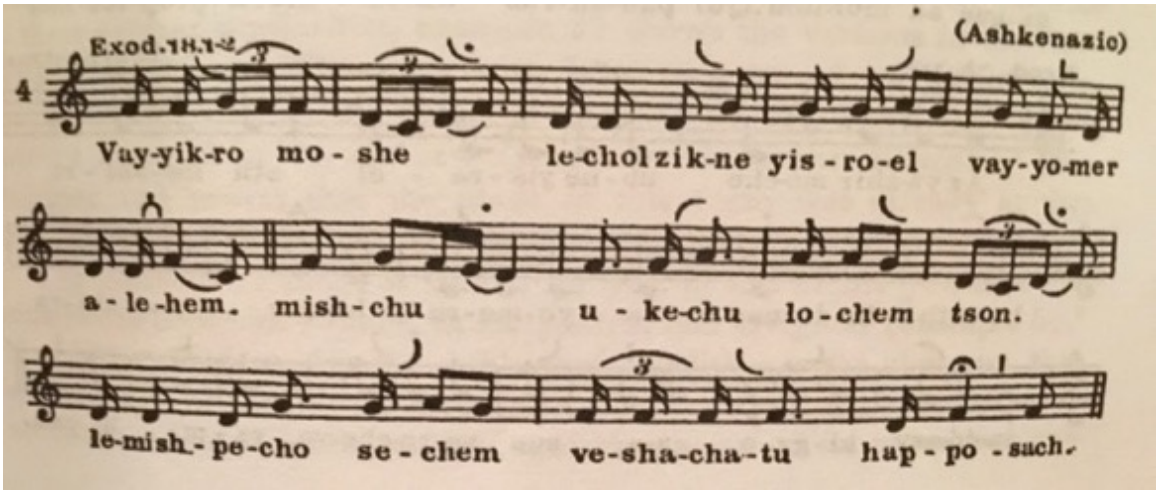


Ex.1. The opening of a song from Sulzer's *Schir Zion* collection

Sulzer's reforms were far-reaching and had begun to spread across Europe and even as far as North America. Following the Jewish emancipation in the Netherlands in 1796, Sulzer's reforms had very soon begun to influence the music of the Ashkenazi synagogues in Amsterdam during a period that was to become considered as their 'golden age of choral music' (Seroussi, 2001: 308). Conversely, after the eighteenth century, the musical creativity of the Portuguese-Jewish community in Amsterdam had fallen into decline, and many were attracted to the new style of choral services of the Ashkenazi synagogues. In an attempt to reverse the movement of Portuguese Jews away from their own community they themselves began introduced choirs into their synagogues. The bicentennial of the Portuguese
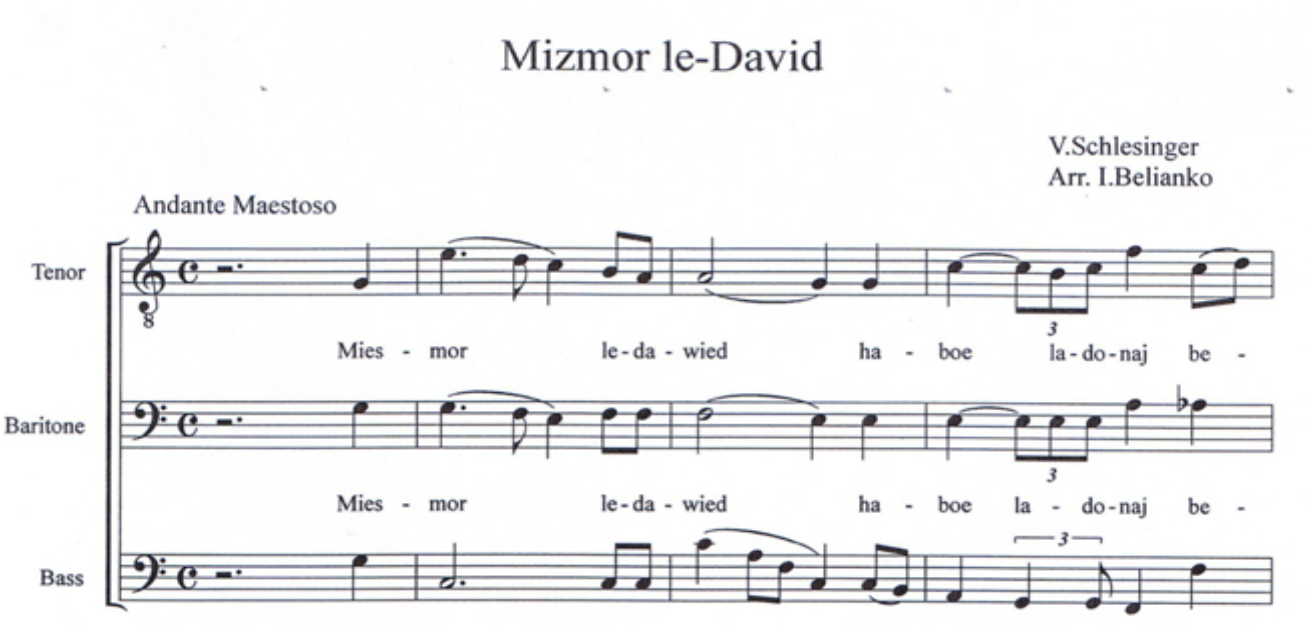
Synagogue in 1875 possibly marked the start of the influence of Sulzer's reformation of liturgical tradition in Amsterdam's Portuguese Jewish community with the formation of a resident choir named Santo Servicio. Musical scores were composed and notated specifically for use by this choir, some of them written by Schlesinger, and many of them still uncatalogued and remaining in the synagogue's archives at the Ets Haim Jewish library, Amsterdam. Santo Servicio started life as a children's choir but was later enlarged to approximately eighty members with the addition of adult male voices. Its purpose was to accompany the singing of the congregation during services, although it did occasionally perform independently during its peak between 1910 and 1939 (Seroussi, 2001: 13-14).

As we have already noted, synagogue music had traditionally been transmitted orally, but as part of Sulzer's reforms it began to be notated, as was the case with Santo Servicio's repertoire. This meant that the improvisatory nature of the vocal lines of the hazzanut was being replaced by the strict and structured code of regular rhythm and meter as used in Western art music of the time. In fact, the model of Western art music gradually became more influential with regards to structure, harmony, instrumentation.

A direct comparison can be made between pre-reformation and reformation synagogue music using the following two examples. In Ex. 2 we see an example of a pre-reformation mode, namely the mode of the Pentateuch which is a mode identical to the ancient Greek Dorian mode. This example was transcribed by David Pinna at the end of the seventeenth century, as originally it would not have been written down. It is worth noting that the 'bars' have been artificially added and do not mark rhythm or meter, but actually indicate and segregate the different motifs used within that example., a technique that would later be used by Gokkes in *Sjire Kodesh*.



Ex. 2. An example of the mode of the Pentateuch as used in the Ashkenazic tradition



Ex. 3. *Mizmor le-David* by Victor Schlesinger-
an example of synagogue music after the reform

Ex. 3 is an excerpt from *Mizmor le-David* by Victor Schlesinger, written for the Santo Servicio choir and made available to the present thesis by the Ets Haim library in Amsterdam. The example clearly shows the influence of the reformation of synagogue music in that it is now notated, has a time signature, has rhythmically measured bars, is scored for three male voices, and uses fixed melodies and a

harmonic structure as used in traditional Western art music (chords I. IV. Vi, and bIV stand out). Controversially in the eyes of many conservative Jews, these elements replaced the ancient, traditional modes and motifs, along with the improvisatory nature of the music sung in the hazzanut. Another element of this new musical style which is not shown in Ex. 3 was the inclusion of organ accompaniments and passages for solo instruments. The use of organ was to prove problematic in many cases, as not all synagogues possessed them (Frühauf, 2015: 189).

Although perceived to have been a positive process by many at the time, the reformation was not however without its critics. It was coincidentally something that came in for lengthy criticism by many people, particularly by Sim Gokkes who later in 1937 gave several lectures openly criticising Sulzer, his methods, and the direction that synagogue music had taken. Gokkes entered the public debate about synagogue music, and in one speech he stated that 'synagogue music is characterized by a non-Jewish spirit and a lack of understanding of religious thought and depth, which is evident from the works of the most famous nineteenth-century composers Sulzer, Lewandowski and Naumbourg' (Veldman, 19 February 1937: 11). This statement by Gokkes resulted in some very critical responses in the form of letters to the *Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad,* the first being a lengthy response from J. Veldman, Cantor of the Rapenburger Synagogue, Amsterdam. In it, he wrote: 'I have to make a strong protest against statements by Mr S. Gokkes, concerning men like Salomon Sulzer and Louis Lewandowski, who are considered leading figures in the field of synagogue singing'. In order to further defend his opinions and attempt to prove that 'not a word is true that has been said by this Dutch musician', he went on to quote statements by men who, because of their 'Jewish scientific and no less musical standing' (Veldman, 19 February 1937: 11), had at least as much musical authority as Sim Gokkes. Then, in defence of the methods of Sulzer and Lewandowski, he goes on to quote Obercantor Eduard Birnbaum who was a well-known cantor, composer and scholar who had studied hazzanut with Salomon Sulzer himself in 1874 (Jewish Music Research Centre, 2019). Birnbaum stated that 'with the beginning of the nineteenth century, when people began to ponder the emancipation of the Jews, and political and ecclesiastical freedom struggles became widespread, synagogue singing in Germany boomed and reached its highest peak in Sulzer and Lewandowski' (Jewish Music Research Centre, 2019).

Gokkes's opinions and comments had obviously sparked a lively debate amongst the Jewish community and certainly succeeded in dividing opinions. In another letter published in the *Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, (26 February 1937), Maurits Koekoek was critical of Gokkes's opinion that there was a lack of Jewish spirit in synagogue music. Koekoek's argued against Gokkes asking 'what [was] wrong with composers of synagogue music [having] written their music in their own way with the musical expression of their era? Why shouldn't this music have a religious feeling? Have not Bach, Handel, Buxtehude or Telemann all displayed their musical-religious feelings in the style of their time? Who does not dare to call a Cantata or Passion by Bach religious'? He also echoed the perceived lack of a Jewish musical tradition when he wrote that 'We Jews have never been able to boast of our own national music […] since despite all religiosity, goodwill and musical depth, an actual Jewish music does not exist'. His closing comments in the letter were quite scathing, more or less accusing Gokkes of contradicting himself and hence devaluing his public opinions: 'Mr Gokkes would be right if he rebuked the habit of playing the Bridal Chorus from Wagner's *Lohengrin* for organ or harmonium at Jewish weddings' (Koekoek, 26 February 1937: 5).

In another letter responding to Gokkes's lectures, Herman Sitters, a member of GeNeCo (Genootschap van Nederlandse Componisten, an organisation that provided for composers' welfare and upholding of professional standards), and a man with much experience of synagogue music, praised Gokkes as an expert but then went on to warn him about generalising and exaggeration in voicing his opinions publicly. He wrote that 'there are musicologists who believe that Naumbourg's compositions, for example, display a sweet-flowing French style. Besides, passages can occur in different compositions that resemble this or that. When analysing a composition by Beethoven, someone thought that one of the themes resembled a familiar street song. Beethoven's composition, however, has lost nothing in value' (Veldman, 19 February 1937: 11).

So, from this exchange of opinions we can see that although Gokkes was deeply influenced by the early teaching of Schlesinger, it later became the catalyst in the process of his rejection of the musical styles employed by the likes of Sulzer, finally resulting in the development of his own reform of synagogue music. Gokkes's

strong, personal desire for change divided opinion in the Jewish community in Amsterdam, but he was able to tolerate criticism, and it became a quest that reached its peak with the publication of his later work *Sjire Kodesh*, written at about the same time that the above exchange of opinions took place. I will offer a more detailed account of this work at a later stage in the present thesis.

Gokkes and the Synagogue

Gokkes's references to synagogue music became a recurring feature throughout his career, and in 1933, Max Vredenburg wrote an article in the Jewish periodical *Ha'ischa,* outlining the Jewish compositions by Sim Gokkes that he had written up to that point. This was of great interest to Vredenburg (1904 – 1976) who was himself a Dutch-Jewish composer and music critic who was passionate about his Jewish faith and whose compositions were often written in the Jewish idiom and reflected his love of Jewish contemporary music – traits that he evidently shared with Gokkes. In his article in *Ha'ischa* Vredenburg pointed out that it was unfortunate that there were so few Jewish composers living in the Netherlands and considering the large population of Jews in the country, there perhaps should have been more. He singled out Gokkes as a Jewish composer who had 'an honourable place' in that category, going on to justify that opinion by further writing that 'only perhaps because of the fact that he has spoken as a Jew in several of his works. In addition, he has shown that he is not ashamed of his origins, but, on the contrary, stands up for it and to display in it what lived in him as a Jew' (Vredenburg, 1 May 1931: 98).

Gokkes had a clear preference for vocal music, which is understandable as vocal expression has historically played an important role in Jewish musical culture. On the theme of the expression of 'Jewishness in music' Vredenburg also wrote that 'almost all music, which we call Jewish, and which we may better call traditional-Jewish, is based on religion. So, it comes from prayer and builds on the word' (Vredenburg, 1 May 1931: 98). This was particularly evident in the earlier work of Mikhail Gnesin[15] and the Society for Jewish Folk Music in 1908, whose influence with regard to

[15] Gnesin was a Russian-Jewish composer who founded the Society for Jewish Folk Music in 1908.

making Jewish sentiment the focal point in music certainly played a big role in Gokkes's works, both religious and secular as we shall later see.

One of Gokkes's earliest works as a mature composer was his *Lecha Dodi,* a work later included in his volume of synagogue songs *Sjire Kodesh* of 1937 which was briefly discussed in the last chapter. *Lecha Dodi* translates as 'Come My Beloved' and the words come from a traditional Jewish poem written by Shlomo Halevi Alkabetz in the sixteenth century. The poem has been set to music in many forms over the years and is used as part of the Kabbalat Shabbat service on a Friday evening, a prelude welcoming the coming of the Shabbat or Sabbath on Saturday. Traditionally, the Shabbat was depicted as a bride, and the Sabbath day itself the wedding ceremony, with the title 'Come My Beloved' being a metaphorical reference to the bride. Translated into English the first verse of the poem reads:

Lecha dodi likrat kala, p'nei Shabbat n'kabelah!
Shamor v'zachor b'dibur echad
Hishmi'anu el ha'mevuchad
Adonai echad u'shmo echad
L'shem ul'tiferet v'l'tehila
Lecha dodi likrat kala, p'nei Shabbat n'kabelah!

Come my Beloved
To greet the bride
The Sabbath presence
Let us welcome!

(Tzin, 2018).

When Gokkes married his wife Rebecca at the Great Synagogue in Amsterdam in 1923, he was requested by Lodewijk Sarlouis, Chief Rabbi of the Ashkenazi community at the Great Synagogue, and Cantor Aaron Stoutzker, that he write a work for the synagogue in the form of a *Lecha Dodi.* The result was a work scored for male choir in four parts (TTBB) and was one of two examples which Gokkes later

sent to Italian-Jewish composer Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco in Italy in 1935,[16] the other being a cantorial solo which was written in 1935. The 1923 choral version of *Lecha Dodi* is an interesting inclusion in the volume *Sjire Kodesh* as it doesn't display any of the modernist traits that we see in some of the other inclusions in the volume or in his later works; understandable considering the works were composed over a period of fourteen years. It was his earliest published work and is very much written in the style of a Bach chorale, as would have been the case with the moderate synagogue reformists such as Sulzer earlier in the century. This indicates that during this earlier part of his composing career, Gokkes was musically still very much under the influence of his earlier teacher Schlesinger. As we shall see, Gokkes would later go down a very different path with regards to the compositional style of his synagogue music.

The existence of two versions of *Lecha Dodi* provides a very enlightening opportunity to outline some of the changes in Gokkes's style and philosophy with regard to synagogue music. On one hand, we have the choral version of 1923 which displays characteristics of Sulzer and Schlesinger, with what is basically a free form composition displaying no attributes of his later modernism, and on the other is the 1935 version in the form of a cantorial solo, which illustrates Gokkes's innovative desire to hark back to the forms and techniques of ancient synagogue song. Ex. 9 (page 82) illustrates how Gokkes has used traditional techniques in his cantorial solo version of *Lecha Dodi*, along with other cantorial music in the volume, and in it, we can see that he has adhered to the traditional use of modal writing in the melody while adopting a recitative vocal style that would have been open to expressive interpretation by the cantor. Also, he has avoided the use of a time signature and measured bars, adding to the improvisatory nature of the passage. All of these elements combined add to the creation of a work that is very pious in its sound, something that Gokkes felt had been missing in synagogue music for many years. Léon Algazi (1890-1971), a synagogue musician and scholar who had earlier studied with Abraham Idelsohn, wrote a review of the works included in Gokkes's *Sjire Kodesh* in *L'Univers israélite* of 20 January 1939. His review exemplifies Gokkes's philosophy and is also very positive in nature. In it, he wrote:

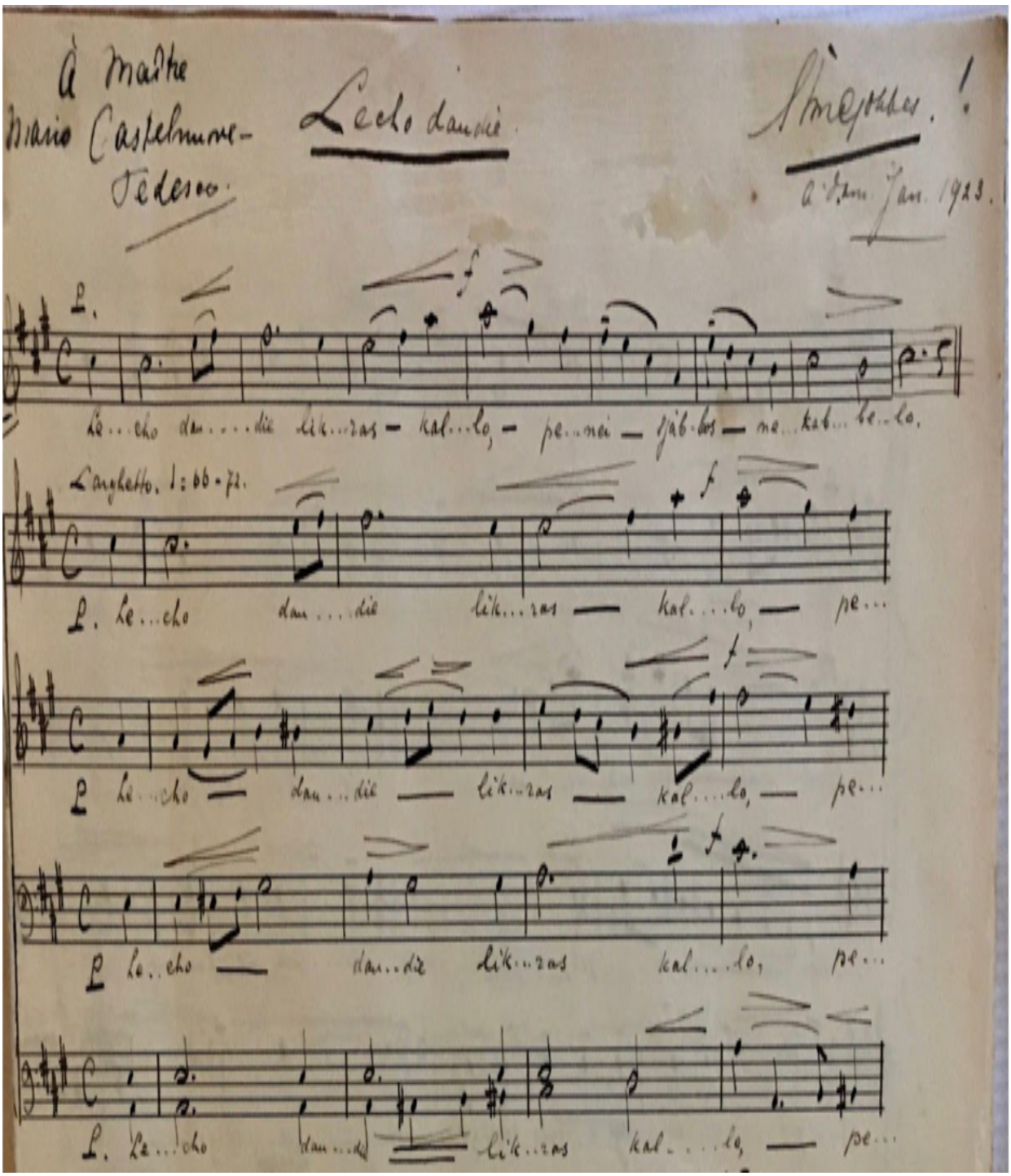
[16] Gokkes felt it important that as many Jewish composers as possible should contribute to synagogue music.

> The author of the book, Mr Sim Gokkes, is if I'm not mistaken, hazzan in the Ashkenazi community in Amsterdam. He does not tell us, but this is clear from the first part of the Sjire Kodesh, which is only a series of 'recitatives' in the purest Hazzan style of the Ashkenazi rite. The main merit of Mr Sim Gokkes is while remaining faithful to the tradition, to renew a style that, for almost two centuries, the most illustrious hazzanim had used. […] Our author succeeds in this tour de force (because it is one), thanks, on the one hand, to his deep knowledge of the Western and Eastern Ashkenazi tradition, and, on the other hand, to a meticulous study that he has made of the voluminous collections of Idelsohn. It is, in fact, because of this that its mélopées (chants) differ from those of most of the Hazzanim composers of the last century and also contemporaries. The melodic language of Mr Gokkes far from being confined to the endless range of two 'augmented seconds' (placed between 2 and 3, 6 and 7 behind) dear to Russian-Polish hazzanim […], is almost always modal. By this and also by a happy sobriety, he joined the authentic musical sources of the synagogue. Also, certain songs of Mr Gokkes have resonances of 'Gregorian chant' which will not in the least shock informed musicians [...]. We follow the author of Sjire Kodesh less well in the second part of his work containing a certain number of choirs with four, five and sometimes six equal voices. Here, we are disconcerted by the style, not to mention the difficulty of execution of the singers, who are put to very hard tests (Algazi, 20 January 1939: 314).
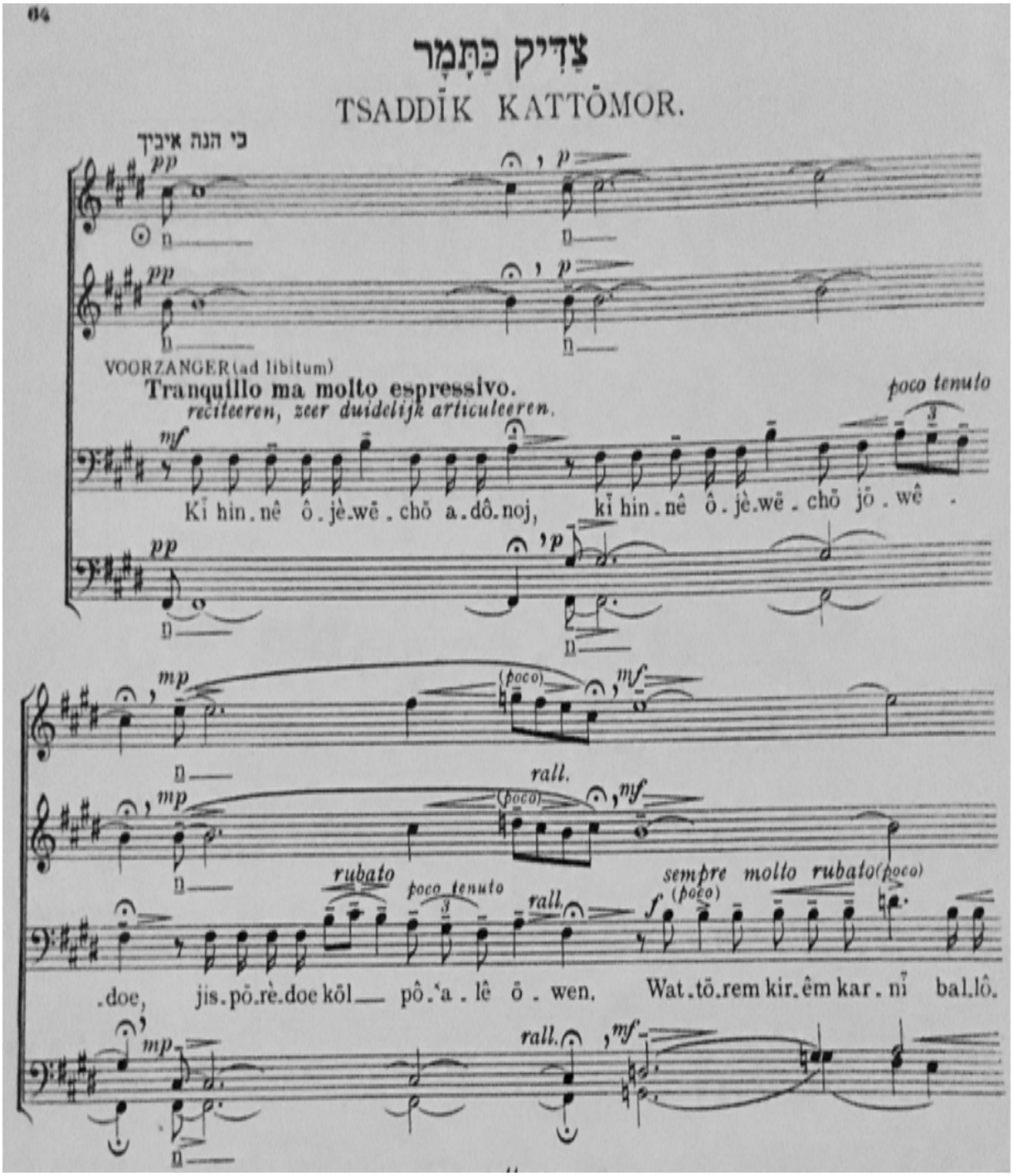
It is important at this point to emphasize the importance of Idelsohn as a formative source for not only Algazi, but as playing a seminal role in the development of Gokkes's own musical ideology. Idelsohn, who was a Zionist, had been persuaded by the president of the Zionist movement to leave Germany and emigrate to Jerusalem in 1907, and Gokkes's familiarity with the work and views of Idelsohn may have had some influence on his own apparent sympathies with Zionism. While in Jerusalem Idelsohn conducted extensive research into the musical traditions of the Sephardi and 'Oriental'

Jewish communities. His field research utilised a phonograph to make recordings, and in 1914 resulted in the publication of the *Thesaurus of Hebrew Oriental Melodies*. He later became professor of Jewish music and liturgy at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati where he later wrote *Jewish Music: Its Historical Development* in 1929. It was these 'voluminous collections', the *Thesaurus of Hebrew Oriental Melodies* and *Jewish Music: Its Historical Development* that Gokkes drew upon as his source of information and inspiration in his quest to develop his own style of Jewish liturgical music. Conversely, in the above review, Algazi draws on his knowledge and perceived understanding of the work of Idelsohn and refers to his dislike of Gokkes's compositional techniques included in the choral works; possibly the fact that some of them still reflected the influence of Sulzer and the reformists, and that others juxtaposed traditional melodies with modernist harmonies.

Ex. 4 is the opening of Gokkes's 1923 choral version of his *Lecha Dodi and* is the version which would have been used as part of the eve of the Shabbat service, presumably with the choir singing it as opposed to the congregation. In the excerpt, we can see that it is an earlier work, and its inclusion in the volume is an anomaly in many ways as it doesn't fulfil Gokkes's vision of a shift away from what he saw as the damage caused by the earlier reforms to synagogue music. Other choral inclusions, however, are very much antithetical, employing a more modernist approach, a source of suspicion for scholars such as Algazi.



Ex. 4. Original 1923 manuscript of *Lecha Dodi* by Gokkes made available by Diana Castelnuovo-Tedesco



Ex. 5. *Tsaddik Kattomor* from *Sjire Kodesh* by Sim Gokkes. An example of traditional style Jewish melodies with modern harmonies

Ex. 5 illustrates this more modernist approach perfectly. The excerpt is the *Tsaddik Kattomor,* another choral work from *Sjire Kodesh*, and refers to Psalm 92. It has no time signature or bar lines, thus dispensing with the contemporary trend of using

rhythmically measured bars, and this gives the music a more improvisatory feel. The harmonies are modernistic for synagogue music of that time, with the first sustained chord being an F# minor chord with an added 11th, which after the first pause mark has the addition of a 9th which further adds to the dissonance. Melodically, Gokkes also goes back to tradition and reverts to using a mode. This particular mode displays European influence in that it is a modified version of the Pentateuch mode, with the addition of two steps below the tonic note. In this case, we see the following sequence of tones and semi-tones: T T S T T S T, making it identical to the Gregorian Mixolydian mode. The mode in that form is known as the Adonoy-Moloch Steiger and was traditionally used for Psalm 92 (Idelsohn, 1992: 73).

These comparisons show that, although deeply influenced by the musical teachings of Victor Schlesinger, Gokkes felt disillusioned and decided to change the course of the synagogue music reform of the nineteenth century by going back to the 'authenticity and purity of traditional Jewish melodies, which had diminished over time' (Scholten, 2015: 98). Gokkes was also aware that synagogue music had to move forward with the times, and in the choral pieces from the book of synagogue music *Sjire Kodesh* he deviates from tradition with a use of harmony and compositional techniques that are thoroughly modern and cleverly used in juxtaposition with traditional methods as illustrated in *Tsaddik Kattomor,* where the accompanying voices hold long, paused notes just using the single syllable 'N', and the sustained chords make use of unresolved dissonance. In many ways, the old combined with the new in *Sjire Kodesh* represents a microcosm of the stylistic development of Gokkes writing throughout his entire career and is a fitting tribute to him and his work.

Sem Dresden

Between 1916 and 1919 Sim Gokkes undertook the final part of his musical education as a student at the Amsterdam Conservatory, which was founded in 1884, just before the completion of the adjacently situated Concertgebouw. During his time there Gokkes was taught by Sem Dresden (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 20 June 1924: 5) who later went on to become the director of the conservatory in 1924. Up to that point, Dresden's achievements were significant. He was primarily a teacher,

composer and also a well-respected music critic for the *Groene Amsterdammer* in 1918 and the *Telegraaf* in 1923. By 1919, Gokkes's final year at the conservatory, Dresden was appointed as professor of composition there and later became director in 1924. In 1937, he then went on to become director of the Royal Conservatory of The Hague, which was a very prestigious appointment, it being the oldest music conservatory in the Netherlands. Along with fellow Dutch composer Daniel Ruyneman he was also a founder member of the Dutch representation of the International Society for Contemporary Music in 1922, an organisation in which Dresden was very much a driving force.

Born into an Ashkenazi Jewish family in Amsterdam, April 20, 1881, Dresden showed his musical talent at a very early age having violin and piano lessons at the age of six and then later with Felice Togni, a member of the Concertgebouw Orchestra. Then in 1901, he went on to have composition lessons with Bernard Zweers at the Amsterdam Conservatory, and during this time his work was very much in the late-Romantic German-style, an influence passed onto him by Zweers. Much against his father's wishes, he then went to Berlin in 1903 to study orchestral conducting and composition with Hans Pfitzner at the Stern Conservatory (van den Dungen, 2015: 65). Through the course of his studies, Pfitzner steered Dresden towards the style of the French Impressionists (Ryker, 2001) which is curious as Pfitzner's later music demonstrated 'anti-Modernist adherence to traditional German artistic values, as manifested in Classical and Romantic music' (Franklin, 2001).

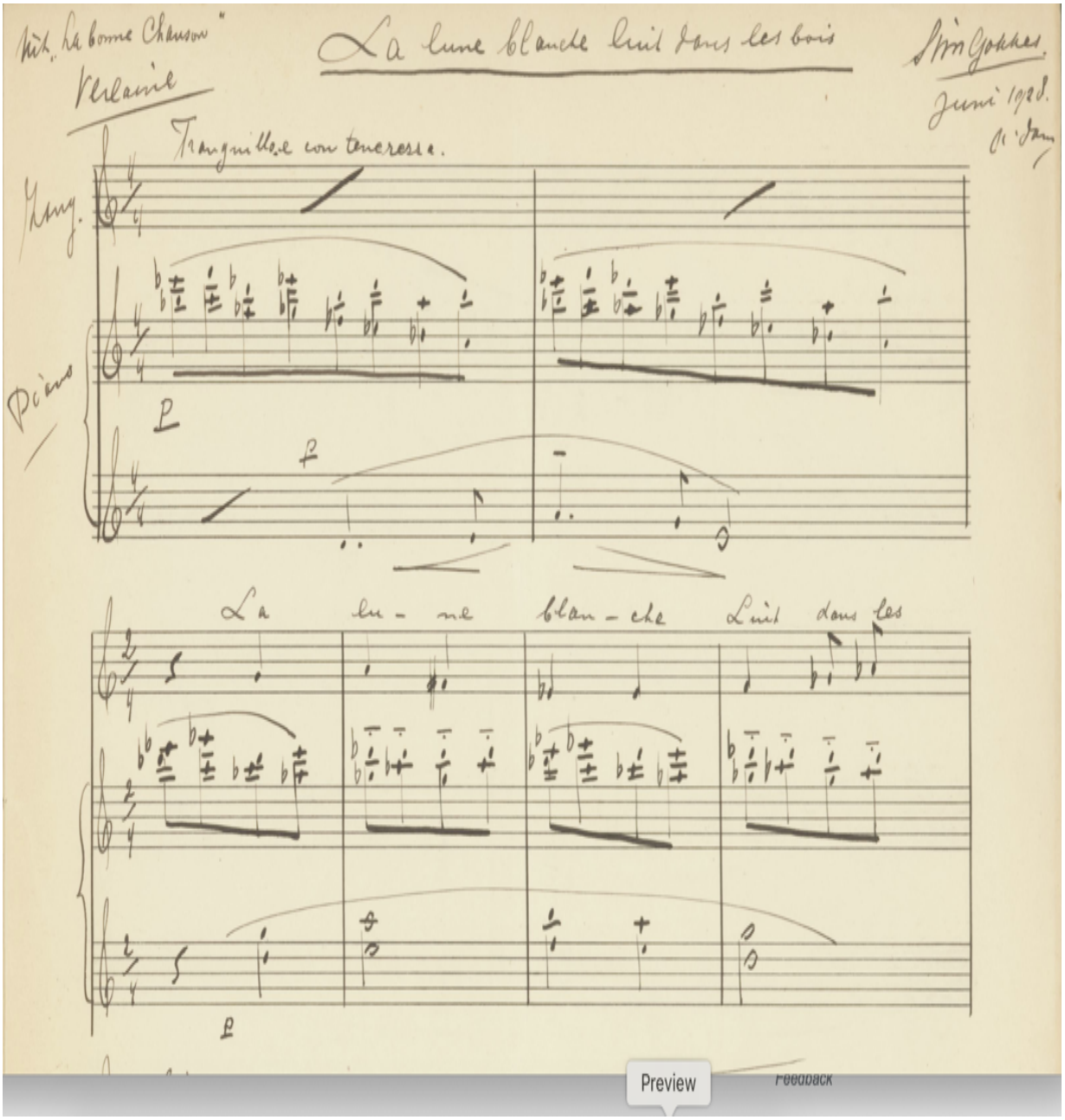
During his time in Berlin Dresden mainly composed songs and chamber music, and Pfitzner suggested that he incorporate 'sobriety and sophistication into his music, especially by studying the ancient polyphonic masters of the Renaissance' (Alders and Pameijer, 2015: 66). The modern French style is particularly evident in his earlier works such as the *Sonata* for flute and harp (1918), with its use of whole-tone scales in the harp accompaniment, and the melodic lines and textures reminiscent of Debussy's *Sonata* for flute, viola and harp (1915).

On his return to Amsterdam in 1905 Dresden was very keen to utilise his conducting skills at a professional level. This combined with Pfitzner's advice to study polyphony from the Renaissance period, led to Dresden eventually forming the Madrigal Society

in 1914. It took twelve months to rehearse this Society's first concerts, at which point they performed Renaissance choral works to great acclaim for the next twelve years. After this, Dresden then founded the Haarlem Motet and Madrigal Society, an ensemble that also went on to perform successfully. One critic who attended a concert given by Dresden's Madrigal Society in 1918 responded very positively to their performance. He wrote that 'the ensemble, consisting of nine excellent male and female singers under the direction of a conductor such as Sem Dresden, excels by the balance of the sound. We admire the clear purity of the sopranos, the depth of the altos, the nimbleness of the tenors and the round sound of the basses, even more so, the "perfection" with which all voices manage to adhere to each other' (*Provinciale Noordbrabantsche en's Hertogenbossche courant*, 9 April 1918: 3).

During this same period, in 1917, Dresden started to teach harmony and composition at the Amsterdam Conservatory, a time when Sim Gokkes received composition lessons from him. Dresden took a great personal interest in his students' development, but never intentionally channelled their personal stylistic development down any one route. Dresden had a marked influence on the development of many of these young Dutch composers and was instrumental in providing a platform for the promotion of their works (Wouters, 1965: 99). Students who studied composition with Dresden and benefited from his encouragement included Jacques Beers, John Felderhof, Cor de Groot, Sim Gokkes, Leo Smit, Frits Schuurman and Rosy Wertheim. Smit and Wertheim, in particular, became successful and well-known composers in the Netherlands before the Nazi occupation. Dresden's influence of the French Impressionists in his mature compositions, although not immediately evident, can also be seen in Gokkes's works.

Ex. 6 is the opening of *La lune blanche luit dans les bois,* written by Sim Gokkes in June 1928, with words taken from the poem of the same name by Paul Verlaine. Incidentally, Fauré wrote a work with the same title which he had published in 1894. It was also used by many other composers, notably Stravinsky, Massenet and Delius, as well as several Dutch composers including Daniel Ruyneman (1886-1963), Léo Kok (1893-1993), Alphons Diepenbrock (1862-1921), Lex van Delden (1919-1988), and Johanna Bordewijk-Roepman (1930).
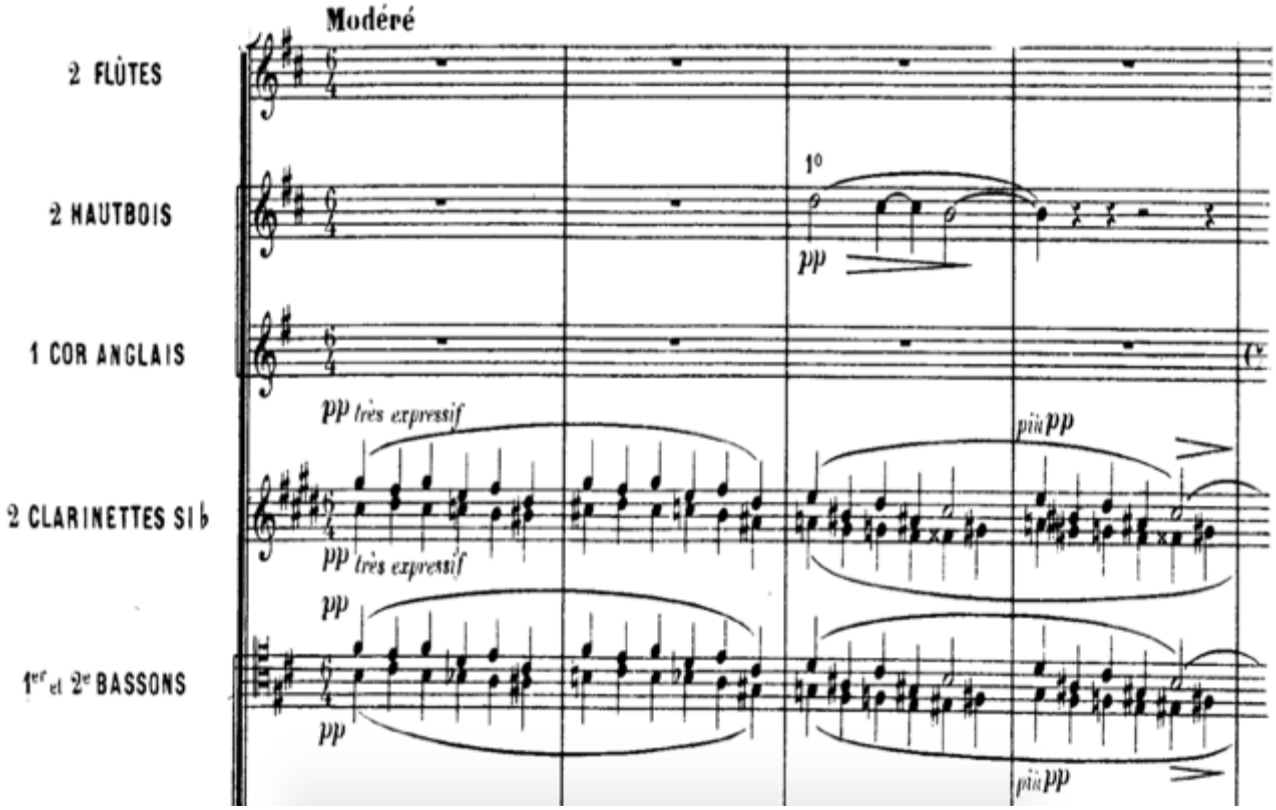


Ex. 6. The opening bars of Sim Gokkes's *La Lune Blanche*, illustrating use of texture found in Debussy's work

and Webern. The song illustrates several ways in which Gokkes was partly influenced by several traits in the music of Debussy. Firstly, we see the repetition of phrase fragments with the rolling quaver accompaniment in the right hand of the piano; this is very similar to the opening section of *Nuages* from Debussy's three

Nocturnes of 1900 and is a device which he employed regularly in his works. Ex. 6 illustrates this, and we can see such repetition in the chordal crotchet movement in the clarinet and bassoon parts. Such repetition in itself is not unique in the history of music, but when combined with other traits it contributes significantly to the 'Debussy' sound (DeVoto, 2003: 179-196). There are also similarities with Mussorgsky's 1874 song cycle *Without Sun* which utilises a similar chordal progression in the middle section of the third song *The Noisy Festival Day is Over* (*Окончен праздный шумный день*).

Debussy also made great use of parallel harmonies, again, something that can be seen in the same opening bars of Ex. 7 with the use of mostly parallel fourths, although not constantly, in the crotchet accompaniment figure. In bars 3 and 4



Ex. 7. Use of repeated phrase fragments in Debussy's Nocturnes

Gokkes has introduced an element of dissonance with the use of major and minor 2nds, again a trait that Debussy employed where such harmonies 'extend from pure

triads with doubled root to a large variety of chordal types with dissonant intervals' (DeVoto, 2003: 186).

In this, and other works by Gokkes, harmony appears to be the dominant feature with sound and sonority taking centre stage, and his melodies often seeming arbitrary by comparison. This is something that can be repeatedly observed in Debussy's music, an example of which is his use of chords that move in a steady motion throughout, along with a melody which has little rhythmic character (DeVoto, 2003: 190). Therefore, it is clear then that Sem Dresden's teaching left its mark on Gokkes with his subtle usage of modern French traits, even though throughout his own career he continued to combine various influences while at the same time developing his very own unique style of composing. Dresden's influence continued throughout the 1920s and can be seen in the six other songs that Gokkes composed during that decade which consisted of *Twee Hebreeuwse lideren* (1926), *C'est en fait* (1928), *De Pilgrim voor Jeruzalem* (1928), *Duiven* (1928), and *Kermesse d'été* (1928). Throughout the 1930s Dresden's influence is less evident as this was a time when Gokkes had begun to develop his musical style, drawing upon other influences, while at the same time focusing on incorporating elements of Jewish liturgical music into his secular works, such as the *Sonatine* for piano (1939). It was also during this period that Gokkes devoted much time to writing music for the synagogue in the form of *Sjire Kodesh* which was published in 1937. These are Gokkes's only two surviving works from between 1930 and 1939 so it is difficult to ascertain whether Dresden continued to wield any influence in any of his lost works from this period. Dresden did however continue to take an interest in Gokkes's work and later contributions to Jewish music and wrote a lengthy and complimentary foreword in the *Sjire Kodesh* volume of synagogue songs.

It wasn't until late 1940 that Dresden was made to resign from his duties at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague at the behest of the occupying Nazi regime. That same year he and his wife Jacoba Dresden-Dhont both moved to villa De Pauwhof in Wassenaar which was a guesthouse for intellectuals and artists who had suffered political persecution or who may have been hiding from the Nazis. This was a place where they both remained until the end of World War II, hence ensuring their survival (de Vries, 1995).

Chapter Five – Gokkes's Conducting Career

Shortly after his time with Sem Dresden at the Amsterdam Conservatory and consequent graduation in 1919, Sim Gokkes was appointed as second Kapellmeister at the Dutch Opera and Operetta Company in Amsterdam. The exact date is unclear, but it was a position that he briefly held before and after his call for military service during a period between 1919 and 1920. This was a company managed by Pauwels, Houckeroth and Kreeft which was granted royal approval in 1908 and was later to be known as the Pauwels en Kreeft Operetta Company (*Middelburgsche courant*, 29 January 1908: 2). The Dutch Opera and Operetta was resident at the Rembrandt Theatre, which was opened in 1902 on the Rembrandtplein, Amsterdam, the main function of the theatre being the provision of live theatre and cinema. Initially, the theatre was home to the Wiener Operetta, a company that performed with famous German singers and whose repertoire includes works by Lehár and Strauss. After this period in 1907 the Pauwels en Kreeft Dutch Opera and Operetta Company took residency, and along with famous opera singers such as Dutch soprano Cateau Engelen-Sewing and Dutch baritone Joseph Orelio, performed a varied and challenging repertoire that included the operas *Tosca, Carmen, Tannhäuser* and *Die Zauberflöte.* Gokkes's first music teacher Ben Geysel was periodically the main Kapellmeister at the company during this time and was probably influential in the decision to appoint Gokkes as second Kapellmeister.

On June 18, 1921, the *Dutch Opera and Operetta* company changed its name to Operettgezelschap Pauwels en Kreeft[17] and was fortunate to have the honour of performing Weber's opera *Der Freischütz* at the Paris 1921 *Exposition hollandaise*, a showcase for the high quality of visual art and performing arts that was being produced in the Netherlands at that time. Gokkes was probably still involved as an assistant with the company at this time and would later return to Paris in 1928 where he would have some of his works performed with Dutch soprano Lotti Muskens-Sleur.

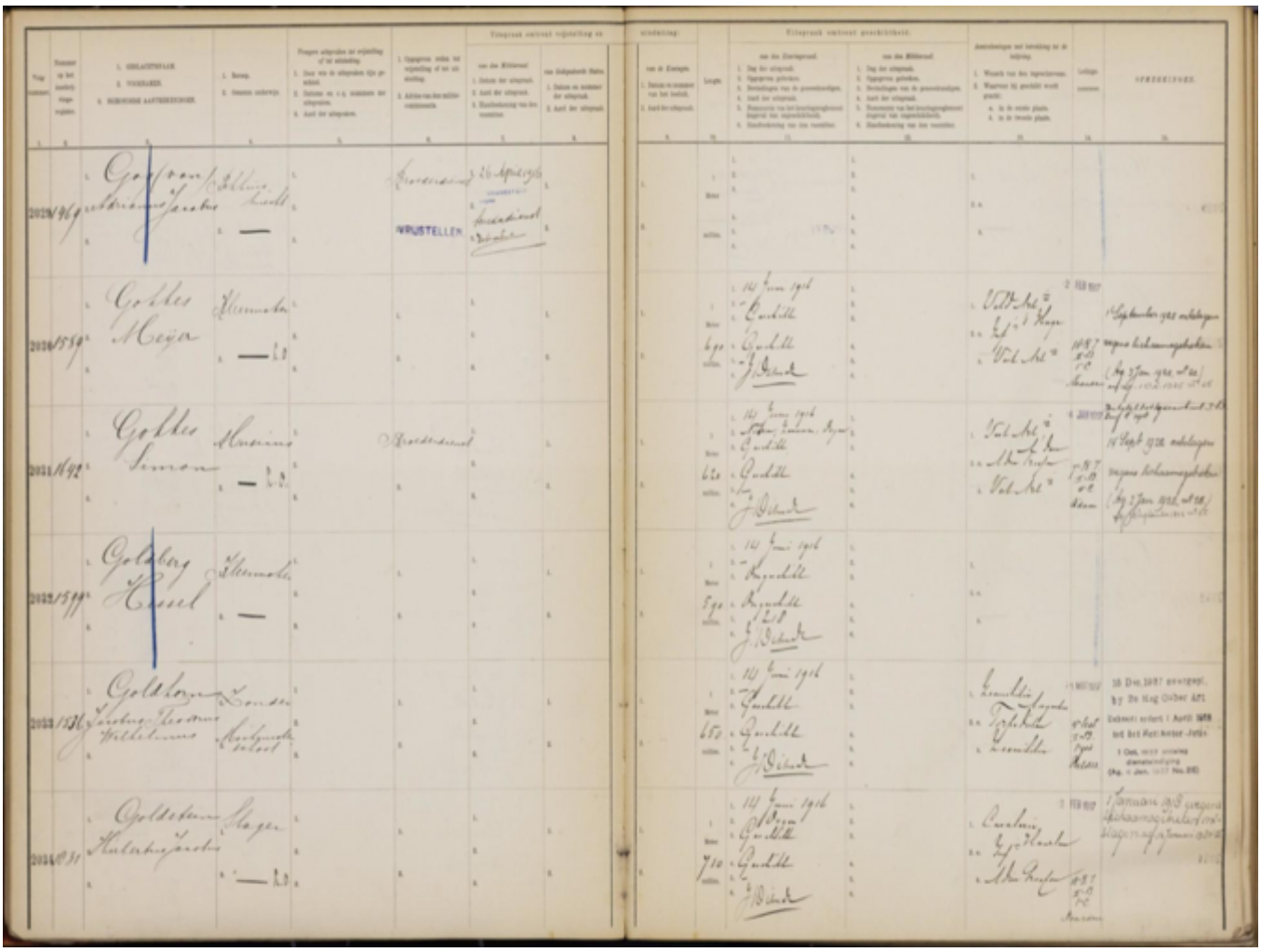
[17] Pauwels en Kreeft Operetta Company.

Again, exact dates are unclear, but Gokkes must have left his musical employment for the prescribed amount of time during his compulsory military conscription. With regard to this conscription in the Netherlands, it was compulsory for all men over the age of eighteen to enlist, and during their period of enlistment, recruits were expected to serve with their chosen units from between eight and nine months. They would receive basic military training and then embark on some form of active service, the type of which is again unclear, as throughout World War I from 1914 to 1918 and up to the time of Gokkes's enlistment, the Netherlands was very much a neutral country, maintaining only a basic level of military defence (Kruizinga, 2014).

Gokkes's military records[18] as shown in Ex. 8, provide information about his conscription and from them, it can be seen that on June 14, 1916, his stated profession was musician, and he was eligible and passed fit for military duty. However, his entry was deferred as the rule was that only one sibling from a family could serve at any one time, and his brother was already serving during the same period. Another possible reason for this deferral could have been the fact that around about this time Gokkes would have been starting his musical studies at the Amsterdam Conservatory.

By 1917 he had stated that he wanted to serve with the 18th Regiment of Infantry based in Naarden, a town situated just south of Amsterdam. This was an interesting choice of regiment as its primary function, as already mentioned, was basically front-line active defensive duty in the field as opposed to garrison-based duties. The exact date is unclear, but Gokkes probably enlisted for a period of approximately eight and a half months during 1919-1920, later being fully medically discharged from duties on September 1, 1925. The time between 1920-1925 was a period of time when he would have finished his active service and returned to civilian life as a reservist, therefore free to continue his previous musical employment.

[18] Gokkes's military records were obtained from https://militieregisters.nl/10.022.018/view



Ex. 8. Gokkes's military record

In 1921, Gokkes started his own musical ventures as a musical director and formed two choirs, the first being a mixed choir named the Amsterdamsche Korenschool, or Amsterdam Choir School, and the second being a male voice choir, Velsens Mannenkoor or Velsens Male Choir. Founded in August 1921, the role of the Amsterdam Choir School was to learn and perform challenging and effective repertoire as opposed to some of the easier pieces that many choirs were performing in the Netherlands at that time and also to foster higher standards of singing and working methods. In April 1923, under the musical direction of Gokkes, they performed a concert at the Concertgebouw with piano accompaniment provided by his wife Rebecca Gokkes-Winnik with Sem Dresden's wife Jacoba Dresden-Dhont appearing as a guest soprano soloist. This particular concert included choral

pieces by Michael and Joseph Haydn, Saint-Saëns, André Caplet and Percy Grainger along with songs by Schubert, Duparc, Franck and Debussy. Reviews from the time were more sympathetic than negative, suggesting that Gokkes was perhaps a little over-ambitious in his choice of repertoire. In 1923 a critic for the newspaper *Het volk* summed this up by writing that 'the composition of the programme, the choice of soloists and the enthusiasm of the conductor were factors that were positive. […] The choir has not existed for very long […] and therefore has to rely upon temporary support – especially for the male voices. The consequence of this, however, was that the tutti singing passages were influenced by some more experienced singers, and because they took advantage of the golden opportunity to make themselves heard, the sound balance was greatly disturbed. Under these circumstances, almost the entire programme was pitched above the ability of this choir' (*Het volk*, 30 April 1923: 18). As shall be seen through his later activities, Gokkes was certainly an ambitious man and musician, although not always content to work within the limits of the musical resources available to him. Conversely, he should perhaps be praised for challenging many younger or inexperienced singers with exposure to such repertoire.

Like his first teacher Ben Geysel, and in fact Sem Dresden too, many of Gokkes's other ventures as a musical director of choral ensembles focused on resurrecting what was known as the *Liedertafel* style of singing, as would have been the case with the Amsterdamsche Korenschool and his first male voice choir the Velsens Mannenkoor formed in the same year 1921. This avenue of musical direction was probably due to the influence of Geysel and Dresden, and as we have already noted, in the *Liedertafel* style of singing the social aspect was as important as the unpretentious singing style employed. Its origins, however, go back to Berlin in 1809 where Carl Friedrich Zelter formed an exclusive singing club in the form of a male voice choir specifically for the bourgeois. This first society was known as Zelter Liedertafel and was composed of twenty-five men for whom any form of musical ability was not considered a prerequisite. However, the gulf between the society's 'institutional prerequisites and the composers' aesthetic intentions' (Dahlhaus, 2011: 48) meant that their repertoire was limited and standard works such as the then newly discovered St Matthew Passion by J.S. Bach were way beyond their ability. Therefore, composers were 'forced to take up a choral style which had to preserve

simplicity without the slightest sacrifice of artistic pretence' (Dahlhaus, 2011: 48). Notable German composers who wrote for these male choirs during the first half of the nineteenth century included Carl Maria von Weber, Schubert, Mendelssohn, and Schumann. Schubert in particular understood what was required by amateur male vocal groups – a good text set to pleasing and approachable harmony in a song that they could learn in one evening (Brinkman, 1970: 20).

These were exactly the same problems that Gokkes encountered in his performance with the Amsterdamsche Korenschool at the Concertgebouw in 1923 where his choice of repertoire really was beyond the ability of his inexperienced singers. Had he the historical hindsight to become aware of the musical pitfalls encountered by Zelter in 1808, then surely, he would have chosen a more appropriate and less challenging repertory that would have done justice to his choir's public performances. He did, however, make efforts to rectify some of these issues in the form of promoting choral singing by offering special music courses linked to the Amsterdamsche Korenschool. The courses were open to everyone for a small fee and without any obligation to actually join the choir, although this was an option if required. Gokkes was attempting to build the foundations of a higher level of musical ability in individuals that may have eventually been available to join his ensemble, which as well as good personal development for the individuals involved, would also be of benefit for improving the competence standards of Gokkes's choir. 1924 was the last time that Gokkes and this choir were mentioned in the Dutch media, having relinquished his post as musical director of that particular ensemble as a result of their financial difficulties, and having not been able to produce lasting results with them (Sim Gokkes, 11 January 1929: 237). However, the choir was later reincarnated sometime before 1928 with its name changed to the Amsterdamsche Koordirigent and had a new musical director, the Dutch composer and choral conductor Fred J. Roeske.

Gokkes's next choral venture came soon after with his appointment in 1925 as musical director of the Jewish men's singing association Harpe Davids based in The Hague. His appointment was made by the whole choir who unanimously voted for him. When appointed, he was addressed by the choir secretary Mr. van Rijs who pointed out that Gokkes was a popular choice with 'all members through his pleasant

manner and pleasant way of working' (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 6 February 1925: 10), and that it was hoped that he would continue to hold his position for many years to come. It was also acknowledged that Gokkes would have a difficult task ahead, but that he was young and enthusiastic enough to have the capability to take the choir forward.

This faith in Gokkes and his level of commitment were misjudged as by the next month of the same year he was no longer the musical director. The reason for this is unclear but it may have been because of the travelling distance involved between his home in Amsterdam and The Hague which is approximately forty-two miles each way – quite some distance in 1925. Harpe Davids had some illustrious musicians acting as musical director during its existence and in 1930 eminent composer Max Vredenburg would also become conductor of the choir.

Gokkes did conduct the Harpe Davids later in 1925 at the *Polyhymnia* international choir competition in The Hague, but that would appear his last engagement with the choir. He did, however, have one personal success with regards to *Polyhymnia* in that he submitted one of his compositions into a competition, the winning works going on to be chosen as the compulsory 'test-pieces' for the choirs performing in the various competitive sections. The compositions were judged by a panel including well know composers and choral conductors of the time Sem Dresden, Anton Averkamp and Hubert Cuypers. The winner was *Psalm 130* by Gokkes and this was consequently made the compulsory work for choirs competing in the 'excellent' section of the competition (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 6 February 1925: 10). Although the work was never again used for competitive purposes, it was chosen as one of the eighteen prescribed concert works for a large choral festival given in Amsterdam in 1929, organised on behalf of De Bond Amsterdamse Zangvereniging (The Alliance of Amsterdam Singing Societies). There were thirty-three affiliated choirs consisting of over three thousand participants from a mix of men's and mixed children's choirs. Gokkes's composition came in for some criticism: it was not considered a good choice by some as it was musically too conservative for the tone of the festival (*Het volk*, 4 November 1929: 4). The work was performed as a concert piece up until 1935 whereupon it seems its popularity faded.

Gokkes not only conducted operas and choirs in the community but he was also heavily involved in conducting both Jewish and synagogue vocal music. His first serious venture into this as an adult came in October 1929 when he was appointed as musical director of the Santo Servicio choir at the Portuguese Jewish Synagogue in Amsterdam. The appointment came about after the death of the previous young musical director Abraham Aletrino who had conducted the choir from the age of twenty-two. Aletrino had been ill for some time and Gokkes had already filled in for him as temporary director since December 1928, so he had had a golden opportunity to establish himself and make an impact with the choir leading up to his full-time appointment (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 21 December 1928: 1). During the board meeting where the appointment was decided, there was however some debate as to whether Gokkes should be salaried for his post; it was concluded that no decision was to be made at that time, indicating that Gokkes initially worked in an unsalaried capacity (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 4 October 1929: 13).

Santo Servicio was, and today still is, the choir of Amsterdam's Portuguese Jewish community, with a membership of over one hundred men and sopranos. Its original formation was very significant, as its existence marked the renewal of a new musical tradition. Up until that point, during the bicentennial of the Portuguese Synagogue in 1875, the tradition of music in the Portuguese Jewish Synagogue had all but become almost extinct, with what little music that was being produced being passed on via the oral tradition, incorporating traditions that had been in place since the eighteenth century. The re-birth of a new musical tradition found its roots in 1876 and was further established by the forming of the Santo Servicio choir which became a permanent part of the synagogue's liturgical life (Seroussi, 2001: 307-308). Most of the choir members, including Gokkes, perished in World War II, and consequently the choir ceased to exist until it was re-formed in 2003. The choir is now all-male and performs during holiday festivals, marriage ceremonies and hazzanut concerts (Esnoga, 2000).

New music for the synagogue was being composed during this period, much of it now being written down instead of orally transmitted as was the case beforehand. Santo Servicio was performing these manuscripts, some of which were specifically written for the choir. The Ets Haim library in Amsterdam still houses this music,

although there is still a lot of research to be done on manuscripts that have not yet been published. Works that Santo Servicio still performs to this day include music by Matthew Moss, Daniel Belifante, Victor Schlesinger and Aaron Schuster. Indeed, during his time with the choir, Gokkes was already formulating ideas that would all later be drawn together to form his published synagogue work *Sjire Kodesh*. Gokkes was actually composing individual sections before this time and was, for example, writing his *Lecha Dodi* from *Sjire Kodesh* as early as 1923, six years before he started conducting Santo Servicio.[19] Gokkes's *Lecha Dodi* ('Come my Beloved") would have been sung in the synagogue during the Friday evening service as a way of welcoming the Sabbath, and several of his other individual works would have had similar roles during Friday evening and Sabbath morning services. The choral version of *Sjire Kodesh* was finally published by Amsterdam publishing company Broekmans and Van Poppel in 1937.

The entire work had been finished in manuscript form by 1936, the same year that Gokkes was appointed as choir director at the relatively newly built Jacob Obrechtplein Synagogue in Amsterdam, designed in a cubist style of architecture by Harry Elte who was deported and murdered at Auschwitz in 1944 (Fine, 2019: 310). During his time there works from *Sjire Kodesh,* composed for four-part male choir, were performed at Friday evening services, and for the first time, Gokkes's ideas about reforming synagogue music were presented to the public and were well received. The *Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad* wrote that 'the characteristic feature of these compositions is that the melody is based on the old synagogue motifs, such as those indicated by Idelsohn in his Jewish musical history works. They are old Jewish motifs in a new dress and decorated to modern taste. The harmonic treatment is distinguished by many original finds and shows that Mr Gokkes can successfully take new paths. His work is highly praised by competent musicians. We hope that Mr Gokkes will find an opportunity to make his oeuvre publicly available through the pressure and thereby elevate the dignity and the Jewish spirit of the Synagogue service' (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 7 October 1936: 9). Of course, the work was officially published the following year, and as can be seen on his record cards from

[19] The composition date was taken from the original manuscript, a copy of which was made available to me by Diana Castelnuovo-Tedesco, grand-daughter of composer Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco.

Westerbork transit camp, Gokkes remained at the Jacob Obrechtplein Synagogue until he was arrested by the Nazis in 1942.

Rescuing Neglected Operas

At an earlier time in 1925, Sim Gokkes started to venture into the world of conducting opera, particularly works that had been long neglected, and it was highly likely that this was the influence of his earlier mentor Ben Geysel, who himself was a prolific conductor of opera. Gokkes was appointed as musical director of an established male choir named Koninklijke Vereening De Vereenigde Zangers (Royal Society of United Singers) (Scholten, 2015: 97) which had previously been directed by several illustrious conductors such as Bernard Zweers who had earlier taught Sem Dresden musical theory, and Hubert Cuypers who was a choral conductor who had studied composition with Bernard Zweers at the Amsterdam Conservatory. This appointment would become a lengthy commitment, and Gokkes was determined to make his own mark on the choir by changing rehearsal methods, eventually introducing mixed voices into the choir and radically rethinking the repertoire to be performed. Before the start of one of the choir's concerts at the Odeon in November 1926, the chairman expressed a desire for a change in direction as he felt that the male choir repertoire had been 'done to death' (Sanders, 9 November 1926: 13), and that singers and audiences alike were no longer attracted it. He went on to describe how the choir was going in a new direction by forming a dilettante opera choir which would perform a variety of short operas.

An interview with Gokkes printed in *De vrijdagavond: joodsch weekblad,* 26 October 1928, which was conducted in celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary, gives an interesting retrospective insight into his thoughts on his choice of repertoire. In it, Gokkes stated that 'we are now mainly committed to old Italian operas, where the soloists are taken from the choir itself, and as an experiment, we gave two performances of *Il matrimonio segreto* by Cimarosa in 1926, with dilettante singers and orchestra' (Hamburg, 26 October 1928: 56-57). In 1927 De Vereenigde Zangers, now transformed into a mixed choir, gave a performance of *Les deux journées* by Cherubini. The room was sold out, the public and the press were unanimously

enthusiastic with Alderman Ketelaar[20] personally complimenting Gokkes. He went on to describe how their next opera would be *La vestale* by Spontini and said in the interview that 'in this difficult work […] I know that I can rely on them [the choir members]. All this stimulates me, and with full energy, I dedicate myself to our union and I have pledged my heart to this artistic institute that will far exceed the choral world' (Hamburg, 26 October 1928: 56-57).

As we have seen, Gokkes's first choice of work was the opera buffa *Il matrimonio segreto* (The Secret Marriage) by the Italian composer Domenico Cimarosa (1749 – 1801).[21] In addressing the first performance of this opera under Gokkes in 1926, it should be borne in mind that although that opera was again perhaps a very over-ambitious choice, he was in the main working with inexperienced amateur singers and orchestral musicians with the support of several professionals. Critics responded to this: the reviewer for the *Algemeen Handelsblad* scathingly wrote that it was 'quite a challenge, therefore, this performance, all the more so since dilettantes, who are excellent choral forces but cannot perform solo, duets or trios. The help of B. Leeuwin and Truus de Bruyn had been called for, but these are, after all, forces that in the late "National Opera" only performed in very modest roles. In order not to be unnecessarily unfriendly, I therefore want to suffice with the announcement that there was much to merit with the dilettantes, at least as far as the vocals were concerned; however, none of the collaborators could act, which is absolutely necessary, especially in an opera buffa' (*Algemeen Handelsblad*, 10 December 1926: 9). He was equally as scathing with regards to Gokkes's conducting when he wrote that 'Sim Gokkes was responsible for the musical direction; in his direction of overture he proved that he had quality, but in the accompaniments, he lacked both calm and decisiveness: when a soloist who once made an entry before or after the orchestra it remained like that. Also, Gokkes almost constantly took the same tempo, and where he wanted to deviate from this, he

[20] Alderman Theodore Matthieu Ketelaar, was financial spokesperson for the Dutch Parliament and a representative on the Arts Council. http://www.parlement.com/9353000/1f/j9vvhy5i95k8zxl/vg09ll27icqk. [Accessed 25 June 2020].

[21] *Il matrimonio segreto* had its premiere on 7 February 1792 at the Imperial Hofburg Theatre in Vienna. It was however rarely performed and largely forgotten after the first half of the nineteenth century: performances in Austria and Germany were rare.

could only lead his people audibly by ticking it in with his baton' (*Algemeen Handelsblad*, 10 December 1926: 9).

Conversely, the *Niew Israelietisch weekblad* was far more reasonable and complementary in its praise of Gokkes's performance: 'This premiere has been a success for Mr Sim Gokkes. His direction is calm and as a conductor he has a future without a doubt. Still young in years, he, a student of Sem Dresden, appears to have considerable experience and imagination. It is thanks to his excellent leadership that the "Vereenigde Zangers" have given a performance that can compete with good opera companies' (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 12 December 1926: 11).

So, bearing in mind that most of the performers were amateurs and also inexperienced in the field of the challenges of opera, the performance was considered a triumph for Gokkes and De Vereenigde Zangers*,* and with time, commitment and more experience they would steadily grow and improve as an ensemble. It would also provide Gokkes with opportunities to rediscover other long-neglected operas.

On 24 December 1927, De Vereenigde Zangers, again under the musical direction of Sim Gokkes, performed their next operatic venture in the form of *Les deux journées* (known in English as *The Water Carrier*) composed by Luigi Cherubini with a libretto by Jean-Nicolas Bouilly. It was in the form of an opéra comique; not necessarily humorous, but a combination of musical numbers with spoken dialogue in-between. This time, the opera was performed in the slightly larger Belle Vue concert hall in Amsterdam, as it was felt that the previous venue was too small for such a performance. Incidentally, this very same opera had been reintroduced into the repertoire of the Berlin State Opera, an organisation that Ben Geysel would have had dealings with at the Berliner Rundfunk during that same period of time. We can only assume that Geysel was in contact with Gokkes and suggested such interesting works for performance.

The Vereenigde Zangers' performance of the opera was judged a success and it was noted that Gokkes had exceeded expectations with this ensemble of inexperienced but greatly improved amateurs. Again, they struggled with the stage being too small for the performance as 'the choir could barely turn around' resulting

in difficult circumstances for the performers, but 'the ladies and gentlemen were more than adequate and even excelled in beautiful singing' (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 30 December 1927: 14). As mentioned, in the audience there was an esteemed guest in attendance in the form of Alderman Theodore Matthieu Ketelaar. At the end of the performance, chairman of De Vereenigde Zangers, Mr M. van Praag, expressed his wishes to Alderman Ketelaar that there may be funding made available to support the continuing success of the company which was struggling financially. It was also openly acknowledged, to great applause, that Gokkes had done so much to make the occasion successful and that he had many good qualities as an artist (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 30 December 1927: 14).

In order to continue building upon the tremendous work that had been done with the association to achieve award-winning standards, they were to next work on the extensive opera *La vestale* by Italian composer Gaspare Spontini (1774 – 1851). This was an opera in three acts where the choir would play a very important role throughout. The chosen work would have been very demanding, requiring large numbers of participants which at that time Gokkes felt they did not possess (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 7 September 1928: 12). Incidentally, this opera was also added to the Berlin State Opera's repertoire for that same year and was again possibly suggested as a potential project to Gokkes by Ben Geysel (*Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 19 July 1929: 9). For logistical reasons the performance did not go ahead, and it was probably this that prompted Gokkes to resign from his post as conductor with the association some months later on 1 July 1929 (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 5 July 1929: 14).

Almost immediately after his resignation as conductor of De Veeringde Zangers, the ever-ambitious Gokkes was instrumental in the formation of a new opera company, one presumably based on the old one, named *De Opera-Vereeniging* (the Opera Association). He was director of this new company, along with an honorary committee comprising of Mrs François Pauwels, wife of the founding member of the Pauwels en Kreeft Operetta Company, F.H.C. van Wijck the alderman of Amsterdam, and Mr L. Robèrt who was the former director of the Dutch Opera. Gokkes stated that 'the purpose of the association is firstly to perform old French and Italian operas, and secondly, to allow young singers the opportunity to come forward

as soloists' (*Algemeen Handelsblad*, 24 July 1929: 13). Again, here we can see that throughout his musical career that like Ben Geysel and Sem Dresden, Gokkes was very much a great advocate of promoting youth and inexperience in the world of choral music, and also an exponent of early 19th century French and Italian operas. The latter could be interpreted as a gesture against the 'standard' Germanic repertoire which had dominated in the Netherlands for so long.

The first challenge for Gokkes as conductor and L. Robèrt as the director would be the study of several forgotten or neglected operas: *Le voyage en Chine* by French composer François Bazin, *Le sourd* by Frenchman Adolphe Adam, and *Oedipe à Colonne* by Italian composer Antonio Sacchini (*Algemeen Handelsblad*,24 July 1929: 13). De Opera-Vereeniging finally performed *Le voyage en Chine*,[22] an opéra-comique in three acts, at the Hollandsche Schouwburg, Amsterdam, on 11 February 1930, accompanied by a professional orchestra consisting of members of the Concertgebouw orchestra.

Bazin was mainly noted for his choral music and was in particular as a great supporter of male-voice choirs in France during the nineteenth century, a genre which was also highly popular in the Netherlands during the same period. His compositional style could be considered conservative as he avoided the more adventurous and progressive styles of some of his contemporaries such as César Franck.[23] The performance at the Hollandsche Schouwburg took place on February 11, 1930, and again received mixed reviews, particularly from the *Algemeen Handelsblad* in which a critic described the unintentional comedy that unfolded on stage: 'Oh yes, it was very comical, consciously, but even more so unconsciously. […] It was comical with the wooden conversations in the spoken dialogue, and comical with the snail's pace of the dialogue, with general silence every three sentences. Also comical was the pleading eye of the prompt who at one point

[22] This opera was Bazin's greatest success and was first performed in Paris in 1865 with the libretto by Eugene Labiche. The storyline 'is a typical farce of mistaken identities, young lovers, and worthy gentlemen embarrassed by taps that won't turn off. The trip to China never takes place, since the ship stays anchored at Cherbourg' (O'Connor, 2001).

[23] Patrick O'Connor, writer for *The Gramophone* Newsletter wrote of *Le voyage en Chine* that 'if one heard the music blind one might guess that it was by Offenbach with his occasional parodies'. O'CONNOR, P. 2001. *Bazin le Voyage en Chine; Maître Pathelin* [Online]. Available: https://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/bazin-le-voyage-en-chine-maître-pathelin [Accessed 11 January 2020].

seemed absorbed with the action on stage or had turned too many pages of the script and was unable to assist the cast if they forgot their words' (*Algemeen Handelsblad*, 12 February 1930: 9). However, musically, the performance of the orchestra and the choir was commended.

The *Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad* was more realistic with its review, pointing out that 'it must first be stated that the people here are not dealing with professionals, but with amateurs' and if Mr Gokkes ever leads such a performance with professionals, then we predict that the success will be much greater' (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 14 February 1930: 5). So, it would seem that the general consensus right throughout Gokkes's work as a conductor of amateur singers, was that he was a very talented conductor not to be judged by the standards of performance produced by young, inexperienced amateurs. The very fact that he was providing opportunities to perform at the highest level possible was a commendable pattern throughout his conducting career; a legacy from his early mentors Ben Geysel and Sem Dresden. Also, in his quest for improving musical standards Gokkes was a man who was receptive to criticism, and when once asked about that particular topic, he replied that 'I always find serious criticism important, if it is favourable - then it is reassuring to me - if it isn't favourable, although of course unpleasant, it is constructive' (Hamburg, 26 October 1928: 56-57).

The *Algemeen Handelsblad* and the *Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad* were the only two newspapers that published reviews relating to this performance, and there was seemingly a marked difference in the assessment made by the reviews, with the *Algemeen Handelsblad* being generally more critical than the *Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad.* The Amsterdam based *Algemeen Handelsblad* at that time was considered to be a very liberal newspaper (Rooijendijk, 2005: 23), but that is not to say that there was no possibility of personal antisemitism presenting itself amongst Dutch journalists and critics in the years before the German invasion as was possibly the case in this example. Much was written about Gokkes in the Jewish media at this time, partly due to the fact that he frequently wrote for the *Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, and also because of the level of his involvement in synagogue music; thus we are able to make such direct comparisons between the Jewish and non-Jewish press regarding his work and speculate on reasons for discrepancies in overall

assessment. There are certainly other examples of political bias between newspapers at this time regarding musical life: one example concerns Willem Mengelberg's reaction to an incident where the statue of Mendelssohn in the Leipzig Gewandhaus was torn from its pedestal and smashed. The *Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad* reacted with outrage to Mengelberg's refusal to apologise for publicly proclaiming his opinion that 'the Germans could not be capable of such an act and that it therefore could not be true' (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 14 May 1937: 5). *De Telegraaf* of 1 May 1937 on the other hand had a very different view and more or less condoned Mengelberg's actions, instead blaming the reluctance of millions of other people to agree with his stance on Germany as mere differences in political opinion. The *Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad* refers to this article and retorts that the reason the world disapproves of Germany 'has nothing to do with politics or government. It is the torture of human beings, the humiliation and destruction, which has made Germany beyond civilization above the divine law, and which has generated the aversion of every rational thinking being' (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 14 May 1937: 5).

A Move in a Jewish Direction

From 1897 a growing notion of Zionism had begun to gather momentum across Europe with the organisation of the World Zionist Organisation by Theodor Herzl and Nathan Birnbaum. That year in Basel they organised the First Zionist Congress where their main objectives were agreed upon. It was against this backdrop, as was the case throughout this period of his career as a conductor, that Gokkes was becoming increasingly concerned with the direction in which Jewish music was heading, particularly the music of the synagogue which he felt was moving away from ancient tradition in its absorption of Western art-music harmonies and the move away from the use of cantillation in the hazzanut. There is no direct evidence to suggest that Gokkes was himself an active Zionist, but his actions certainly imply sympathy towards that political cause; also, he would at a later point be invited by Bronisław Huberman to conduct in Palestine, an offer he ultimately turned down. This possible affiliation to Zionism can be illustrated if we compare some of Gokkes's musical philosophy with the World Zionist Organisation's third objective which aimed to promote 'the strengthening and fostering of Jewish national sentiment and

national consciousness' (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013). Gokkes's first major inroads into this territory came in 1929, when he established and became conductor of Een Joodsche Oratorium-Vereeniging van Nachaliël (Jewish Oratory Association of Nathaniel) which was to be primarily concerned with 'the awakening of Jewish life' and 'bringing Jewish art into Amsterdam' (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 4 January 1929: 2) in an attempt to present something uniquely rooted in Jewish tradition to Jewish audiences in Amsterdam. This proposed revival of Judaism in music was to take the form of the choir only performing sacred music with Jewish text or Biblical Dutch. They would also only perform music written solely by Jewish composers so that more Jewish music would rightfully be able to take its place in the standard repertoire. In Gokkes's view, who could perform such compositions better than the Jews themselves, under the direction of a Jewish conductor and with the cooperation of Jewish soloists or instrumentalists? This would become the mission of Een Joodsche Oratorium-Vereeniging van Nachaliël (Gokkes, 11 January 1929: 237).

There were similar non-Jewish religious associations that existed in Amsterdam before this such as the Royal Oratory Association, the Christian Oratory Association, and the Roman Catholic Oratory Association. What was lacking until 1929 was an association concerned with Jewish music. In 1929 Gokkes wrote an article in *De vrijdagavond; joodsch weekblad* expressing surprise about how 'Dutch Judaism in general, and the Amsterdam-Jewish population in particular, have been able to live without a specific Jewish oratory for as long as they have' (Gokkes, 11 January 1929: 237). Amsterdam in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw an expansion of the Jewish population and had consequently started to establish a powerful musical life in Judaism making it potentially one of the main centres for Jewish music in the whole of Europe (Gokkes, 11 January 1929: 237). It is no wonder that Gokkes felt that the people of Amsterdam deserved their own Jewish oratory association, keeping in line with other religious denominations in the city. Gokkes's actions in establishing the association in Amsterdam were a historic occasion, laying the foundations for developing a stronger tradition of musical life within their faith.

Gokkes wasn't however the first in Europe to re-establish a Jewish identity and expression within Jewish oratory organisations. The first such organisation was established in 1899 by Polish attorney N. Shapiro in Łódź, Poland. Shapiro had to petition Polish government officials in order to gain permission to form the choir, as normally such organisational gatherings would have been considered politically subversive, and hence forbidden. Shapiro argued that forming such an organisation would, in fact, serve to keep 'the young people away from the revolutionary and anti-government assemblies that were poisoning their minds' (Jacobson, 1980: 59). Consequently, permission was granted, and the formation of Europe's first Jewish choral organisation went ahead.

This Polish organisation's first conductor was eighteen years old Joseph Rumshinsky, who in his later autobiography wrote about the passion that was aroused with the singers during his first rehearsal with them: 'When we stood up and started to sing, a holy musical fire was kindled by the first Jewish choral ensemble in the world' (Rumshinsky, 1944: 189). The choir was eventually named Ha-zamir and its popularity in Łódź inspired others to form similar branches in other European cities; all with the same common goal of devotion to national sentiments through the form of musical expression. This concept of 'a holy musical fire' is certainly something that Gokkes was striving to achieve with his choir some years later in Amsterdam, possibly inspired by the chain of events created by the Ha-zamir franchise that had spread across Europe during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. After all, Gokkes was fully aware that other composers across Europe were 'composing works of Jewish purport, or of Old Testament content' (Gokkes, 11 January 1929: 237), so we can reasonably assume that he was aware of the developments of Ha-zamir. The musical passion and collectivity aroused by the Ha-zamir organisation can be perfectly illustrated by the fact that it even had their own anthem, composed in 1903 by Leo Low, conductor of the Warsaw Ha-zamir, with lyrics written by David Frischman. These lyrics almost give rise to the sentiment that Jewishness was as much a nationality as a religion.

Zamru 'ahim zamru!
U-va-zimrah ne'orer 'am.

Sing, brethren, sing!

Then with song we will rouse the people. (Jacobson, 2019).

Chapter Six – The 'Most Jewish' of the Dutch-Jewish Composers

As a music critic living in The Hague, Vredenburg wrote for several social-democratic newspapers such as *Vooruit* and *De Socialistische Gids*, and also taught at the conservatory there where he founded the Haagsche Studiekring voor Moderne Muziek (The Hague Research Society for Modern Music). Vredenburg was so passionate about his faith that he became a Zionist from the age of eighteen and it was an affiliation that would stay with him through his life with many of his musical and political lectures regularly published in the Jewish Zionist Union's periodical *De joodsche wachter*. It was because of his Jewish background that in 1941 he fled to Batavia (now Jakarta) to escape Nazi persecution, and while there was interned by the Japanese (Pabbruwe, 2015: 258).

Sometime before his move to Batavia, against the backdrop of a growing trend of Zionist sentiment and possibly as an expression of his own devotion to Jewish music, he also wrote an article for the Jewish periodical *Ha'ischa* in 1931 in which he posed the seemingly simple question, 'who are our current Jewish composers?' (Vredenburg, 1 May 1931: 98). Many secular composers and musicians could have laid claim to being 'Jewish' in their music and many commentators have put forward arguments to support such claims. One such commentator was Idelsohn who certainly had the research background and expertise that qualified him to put forward his views on the question raised by Vredenburg. The real question, according to Idelsohn was one of sounding identity and originality: 'whether or not Jewish musical sounds vibrate in their compositions or in their performances; whether they brought to the music of the general world a distinctively Jewish contribution' (Idelsohn, 1992: 471). Of course, it could also be argued that non-Jewish composers could possibly achieve such results and therefore poses another question, namely, how can we define Jewish sounding music, and can it be produced by non-Jews?

These are the questions underpinning Vredenburg's article, and he goes on to pose a related one: how can we recognise a specific nationality in a piece of music? Composers have written music using similar tonal or atonal protocols in many different neighbouring countries, but what makes a piece of music sound typically

Dutch? He goes on to point out an obvious example in which 'the Gypsies and the Spaniards have their Bolero, or other such national dances', making the cultural origins of music from those cultures or regions instantly recognisable (Vredenburg, 1 May 1931: 98). Idelsohn adds that 'the classic music created by the Germans has the imprint of German folk-song and character; while Russian music unmistakably bears the marks of Russian folk-song and character' (Idelsohn, 1992: 474). However, it is not quite that simple because of the transient nature of musical stylistic influences between different countries. Works by composers such as Mozart for example, became Germanic works with a touch of Italian influence, indicating that environmental influence was just as important as musical training (Idelsohn, 1992: 474). Likewise, composers of the Jewish diaspora, often scattered throughout many different parts of western and eastern Europe, also adapted to their environment, whether it be in Germany, Poland, or Hungary, incorporating musical processes in each case. This, however, did not provide the required sense of passionate nationalistic attachment in their music, but it did result in an eventual increase of Jewish self-awareness, allowing 'national sentiment to awaken' (Vredenburg, 1 May 1931: 98).

This awakening of national sentiment invoked a national identity for Jewish composers which 'was based on more than simply the evocation of Jewish religious ritual; it required the composer to be in touch with a set of emotions shared by dispersed members of the Jewish nation' (Walden, 2014: 3). Authenticity in Jewish music then can be described as the product of a mixture of the objective and the subjective. 'The objective element consists of composers' use of melodies compiled during ethnographic scholarship as the principal themes of their compositions. The subjective component involves evoking the sentiment of what many authors describe as the Jewish *soul'* (Walden, 2014: 3).

Several composers, both Jewish and non-Jewish have tried to replicate this authentic Jewish sound, with varying degrees of success, and in his article, Vredenburg singles out several Jewish composers from all over Europe who he felt encapsulated 'Jewishness' in their music and were therefore in his eyes possibly sympathetic to or at least aware of the Zionist cause. His list includes Mikhail Gnesin (1833 – 1957), Joseph Achron (1866 – 1943), Alexander Krein (1883 – 1951),

Moses Milner (1886 - 1953), Ernest Bloch (1880 – 1959), Alexander Veprik (1899 – 1958), Darius Milhaud (1892 – 1974), Ernst Toch (1887 – 1964), Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895 – 1968), and Sim Gokkes (1897 – 1943). It is interesting to note that several composers on the list were Russian, as this is really where the rise in Jewish nationalism in music began at the end of the nineteenth century, partly due to the important status that many Jewish musicians had in Russia at that time. In addition to this Russia had the largest Jewish population in Europe, with approximately 70% of the population actually being Jewish (Sabaneev and Pring, 1929). This national revival of Jewish art music was instigated primarily by the composers who graduated from the Moscow and St. Petersburg conservatories, formed the Society for Jewish Folk Music in 1908, and who wanted to form a Jewish national school in music in order to promote nationalism amongst Jewish composers. The movement was led by the composer and music critic Joel Engel, and once this wave of Jewish nationalism had established itself in Russia the phenomenon rapidly spread across other parts of Europe. (Sabaneev and Pring, 1929: 449-451).
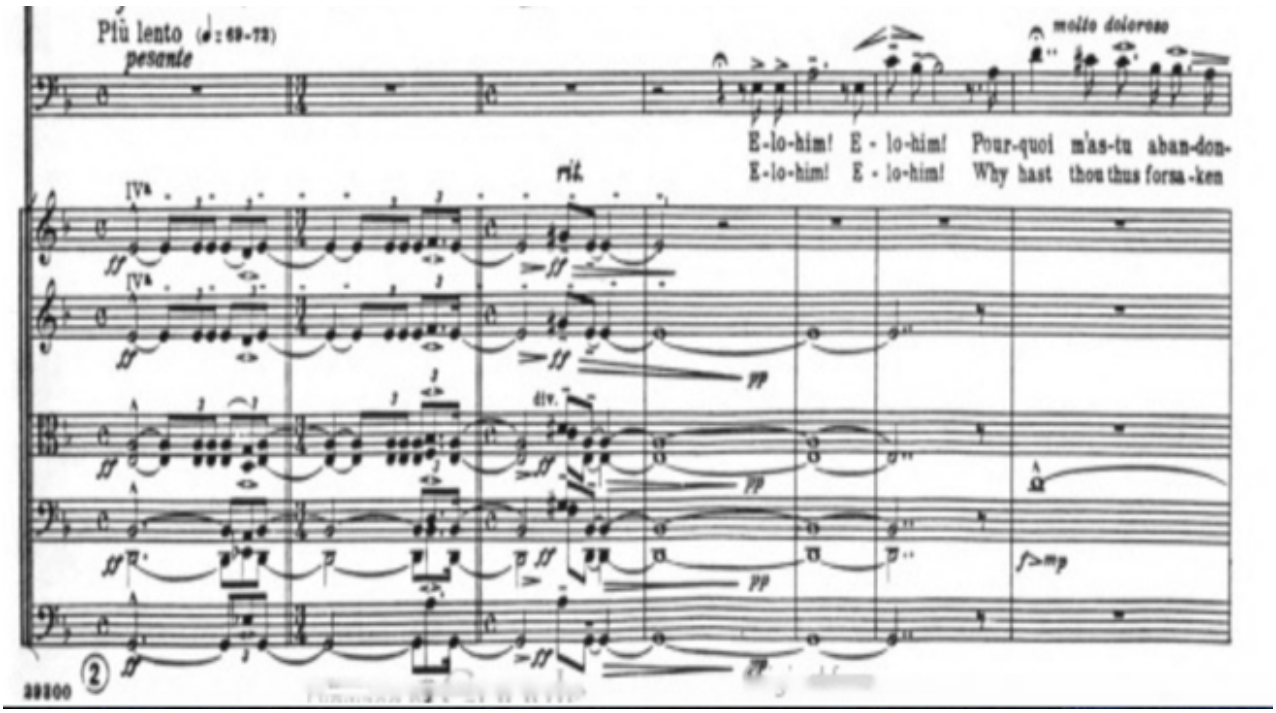
These trends and developments would have had an impact on Gokkes, leading to him to make his own contributions towards the development of Jewish music at a slightly later time. Prior to this, in the nineteenth century, Jewish populations generally felt insecure, with a need to feel accepted within their countries and communities. However, this changed in the twentieth century with a new air of confidence amongst Jews bough about by emancipation and assimilation, which in turn eventually resulted in a trend for promoting Jewish heritage through music (Knapp, 2012: 569). In 1909, with the advent of recorded music, the Society for Jewish Music was instrumental in conducting significant research into Jewish music, with Gnesin important in setting a trend for channelling this into a compositional style. This sentiment spread across Europe and had a particular effect on composers such as Bloch and Milhaud, who, although they didn't compose exclusively Jewish music, felt it important to express their ethnicity through their music (Knapp, 2012: 569). As we shall shortly see, we know from an interview conducted with Gokkes's niece Mina Moppes-Gokkes that Sim Gokkes was in contact with both Bloch and Milhaud, so it is, therefore, safe to assume that Gokkes was aware of such developments outside of the Netherlands, hence serving to fire his own passion for such developments in that field.

One of the composers who was a founder member of the *Society for Jewish Folk Music* (1908), and also responsible for instigating a Jewish national school in music was Russian composer Mikhail Gnesin (also spelled Gnessin). Gnesin was born 1883 in Rostov-on-Don into a Jewish family, and his early musical education began with Cantor Gerovitz and Oscar Fritch at the Rostov Technical Institute. Later, he continued his studies at the St. Petersburg Conservatory under Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov. He was refused a place at the Moscow Conservatory as they had already filled their Jewish quota of students. Gnesin then went on to work with fellow Russian-Jewish composer Joseph Achron, and together they organised the activities of the Society for Jewish Folk Music (Jewish Music Research Centre, 2020).
His compositions from 1914 onwards made extensive use of Jewish and Yiddish traditions, and to seek inspiration and facilitate this Gnesin made several visits to Palestine. Then, when the Russian Revolution ended in 1917, Gnesin produced many compositions demonstrating his commitment to Jewish art music movement, including a string quartet, *Variations on a Jewish Folk Theme* (1917), *Symphonic Fantasia* (1918), *The Maccabees* (1921), an opera in the Hebrew language *Abraham's Youth* (1922), and a song cycle based on Jewish texts *Tales of the Red-Headed Mottele* (1929) (McKee, 2007).
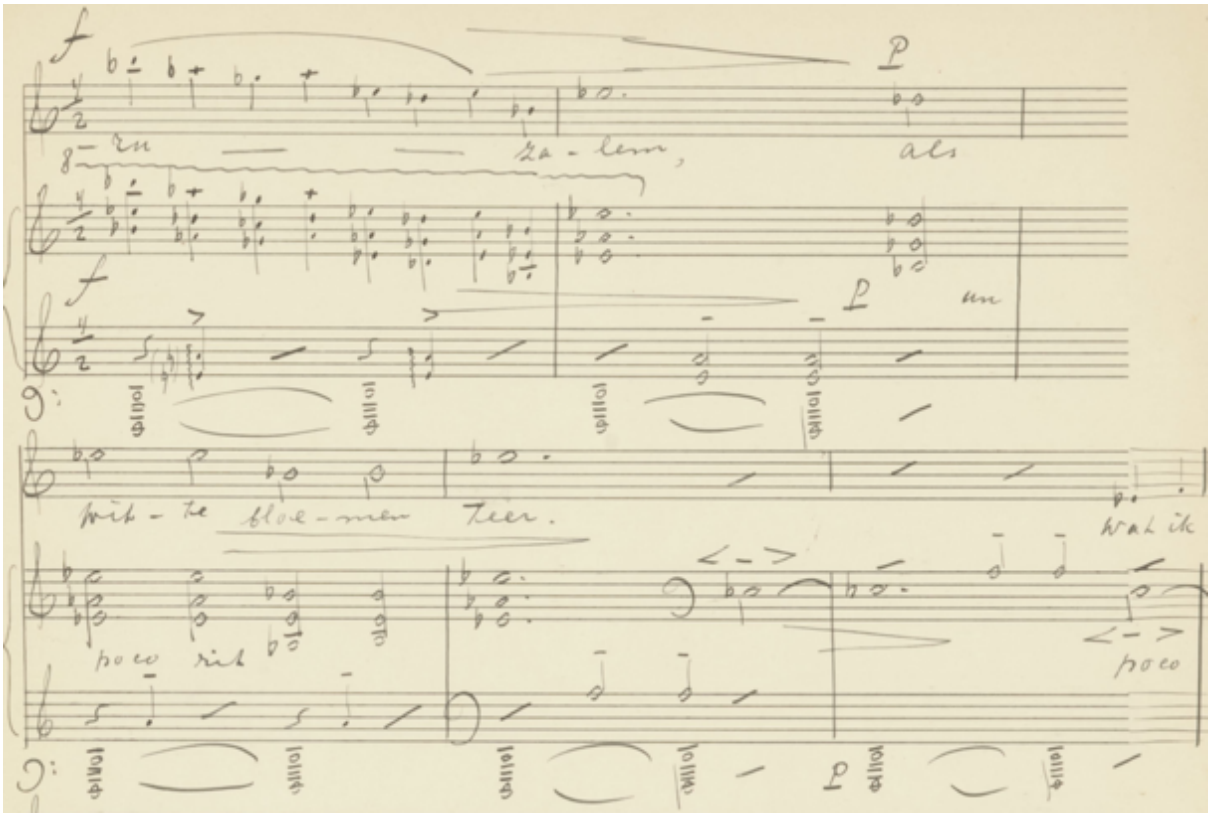
However, in 1930 he encountered increasing levels of antisemitism, forcing him to cease the promotion of Jewish music. Eventually, the Nazi invasion of Russia resulted in his evacuation to Yoshkar-Ola and Tashkent, enabling him to avoid persecution.

Further afield, the wave of Jewish nationalism in music started by Gnesin was having an impact on the compositional styles of several well know Western European composers, some of whom such as Bloch and Milhaud had direct contact with and influenced Gokkes to some degree. From an interview between pianist and musicologist Frans van Ruth and Sim's niece Mina Moppes-Gokkes we know that Gokkes was in contact with Bloch and that he was also in possession of several of Milhaud's works, implying that he was aware of these composers embracing their Jewish identity in their music (Moppes-Gokkes, 1995). In order to both verify and illustrate some of these influences it would be helpful at this point to make some
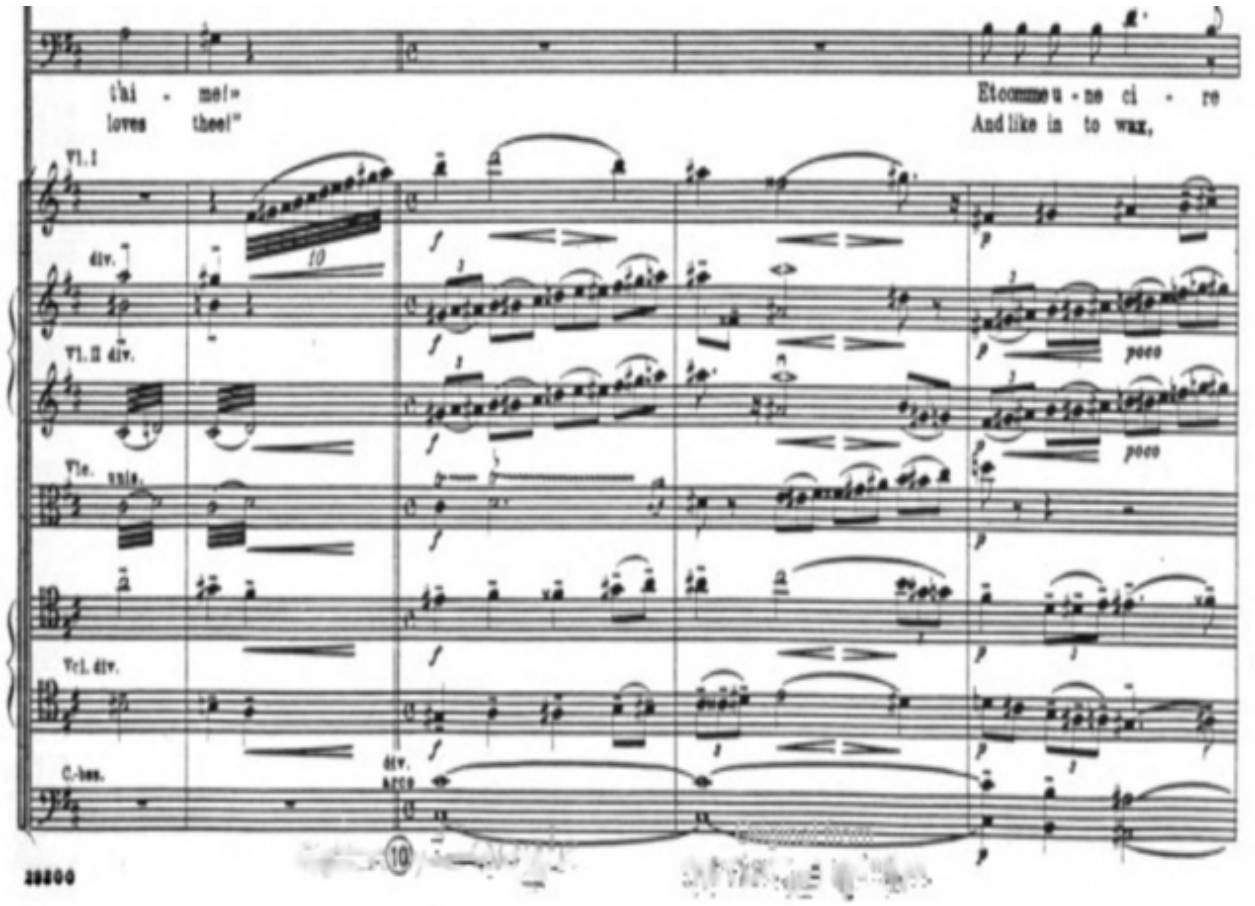
direct comparisons between the works of Bloch and Milhaud with a selection of relevant works by Gokkes, Bloch's *Psalm 22* was composed in 1914, scored for baritone voice and orchestra, and in which he draws upon a religious text as a basis for its musical content. *Psalm 22* itself has significance in the Jewish faith as it is interpreted as referring to the plight of the Jewish people and their distress and alienation in exile. Gokkes also used religious text and Jewish religious poems as an inspiration for several of his works including the Book of Esther in *Kinah* and the *Sonatine* for piano, and *Sjire Kodesh* which includes several musical settings of psalms. Musically there are also similarities as can be seen in examples 9, 10, and 11 below. A regular feature of Bloch's melodies is the use of the interval of a rising perfect fourth which evokes the Call of the Shofar as it is sounded on the High Holy Days. This motif can be seen in bar 4 of the vocal line (top line) in Ex. 9 which is taken from the start of Bloch's *Psalm 22* and recurs in several places thereinafter. The same rising 4th can be seen in Gokkes's *De Pelgrim voor Jeruzalem* in Ex. 10 at the end of bar 1 going into the start of bar 2 of the vocal line. Here it is used in a proclamatory manner at the end of the phrase on the word 'Jeruzalem' and occurs again on the next line albeit with different text. Another of Bloch's compositional traits that we frequently observe in Gokkes's work is the use of pedal points. Ex. 11 illustrates Bloch's use of a pedal note in *Psalm 22* where he uses a C in bar 3 which is sustained beneath changing chromatic harmonies above. The same device can be observed in Ex. 10 where Gokkes uses a sustained B beneath changing chromatic harmonies.



Ex. 9. The start of Bloch's *Psalm 22* with an example of a rising fourth in bars 4/5
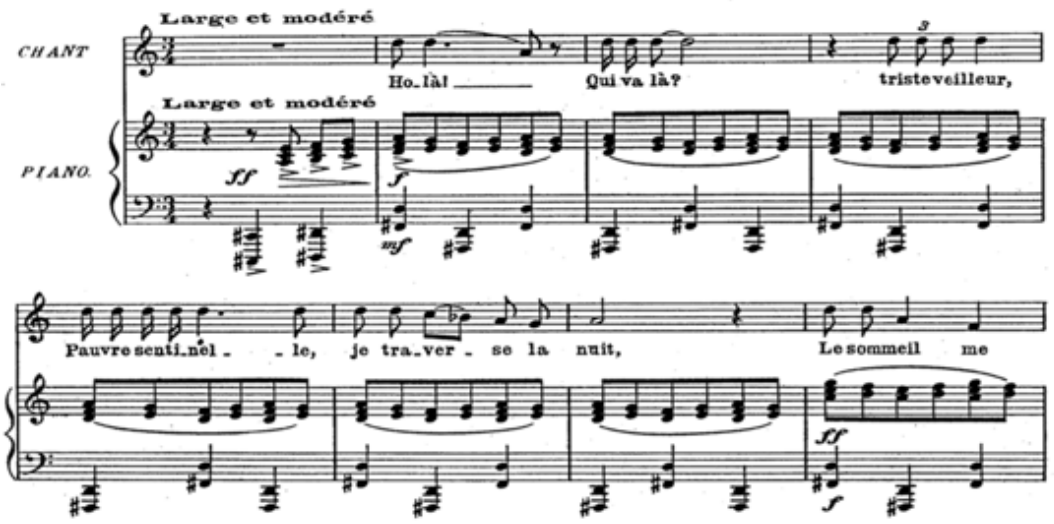


Ex. 10. Gokkes's *Pelgrim voor Jeruzalem* with a rising fourth at the end of bar 1



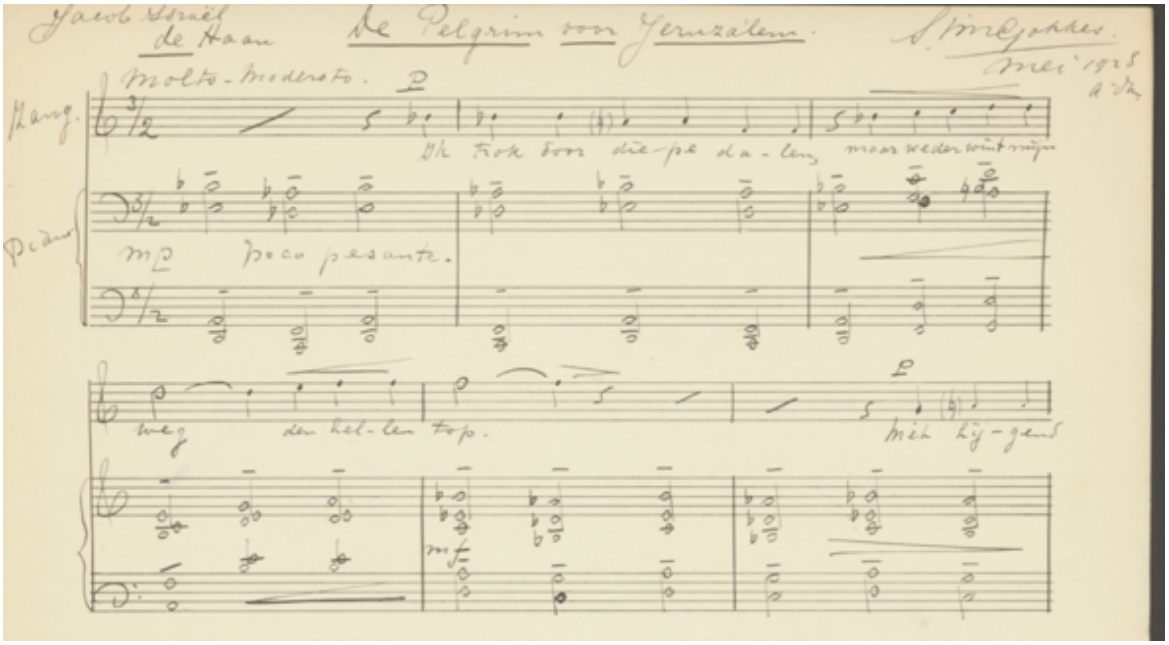
Ex.11. Use of a pedal C in the bass line of Bloch's *Psalm 22*

Gokkes's *De Pelgrim voor Jeruzalem* can also be compared with *Le Chant du Veilleur* which is the second song from Milhaud's cycle *Six Chants Populaires Hébraïques* op.86 (1925) in Ex. 12. Both composers utilise Jewish text in their respective songs and there is a very close similarity between the accompaniments. Ex. 12 is an excerpt from the beginning of Milhaud's *Le Chant du Veilleur* and utilises a repeated three beat pattern in the left-hand part of the piano accompaniment which also demonstrates Milhaud's propensity for the use of ostinato as a musical device in much of his work.



Ex. 12. Milhaud's *Chant du Veilleur* demonstrating a repeated three beat pattern in the left-hand part of the piano

Gokkes employs a similar repeated three beat pattern in his left-hand part which can be seen in Ex. 13. Another of Milhaud's compositional traits is utilised in the piano accompaniment in Ex. 12 with implied bitonality between the right- and left-hand parts. This is mirrored in the way Gokkes treats his piano accompaniment in Ex. 13.



Ex. 13. A similar use of a repeated three-beat figure in the left-hand part of Gokkes's *Pelgrim voor Jeruzalem*

Gokkes not only drew upon the influences of other composers of Jewish origin, but he was also proactive in advising others with regards to the promotion of synagogue music and the techniques that he subscribed to. He was in contact with the Jewish-Italian composer Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, another composer who incorporated Jewish sentiment into many of his works. Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco was born 1895 in Florence, Italy into a Sephardic Jewish family that had lived in Tuscany since the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in the fifteenth century. He and his wife Clara eventually emigrated to the USA in 1939 to escape Italy's new fascist policies which saw a rise in antisemitism.

In 1925, he discovered a notebook that had belonged to his grandfather, containing musically notated Hebrew prayers, the discovery of which would have a profound effect on Mario's life and composing and would become the basis of *Lecha Dodi* later completed on the request of Gokkes. In 1940 Castelnuovo-Tedesco wrote: 'I found there the source of my whole life, both in music and in faith; it was the revelation, the symbol perhaps of my destiny… And so, I decided to compose my first Jewish work, which I dedicated to his memory and composed for the piano -- the instrument which he wished me to play. I asked my mother to sing for me again the old, beloved melodies which I had heard him sing in my youth, and on these themes, through "the oral tradition" (as in the old times) I constructed my Hebrew Rhapsody' (Wachowski, 2007).

He went on to compose a substantial amount of music that contained Jewish themes including *Genesis Suite*; *Memorial Service for the Departed*; *Naomi and Ruth*; *Prayers my Grandfather Wrote*; *Sacred Service for the Sabbath Eve*; *V'erastikh*; and his Violin Concerto No. 2. In 1936, at the request of Gokkes, he also composed a *Lecha Dodi,* subtitled *Prayers my Grandfather Wrote,* for the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam. On 21 September 1935, Gokkes wrote to Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco in Florence asking him to compose this particular piece of music as he felt it very important that Jewish composers lend themselves to this idiom. The following are transcripts of the correspondence taken from the original letters written in French and provided for the present thesis by Castelnuovo-Tedesco's granddaughter, Diana Castelnuovo-Tedesco.

Dear Sir,

I received your honoured letter of September 13 for which I thank you very much. I would like a composition of yours on one of the following texts for the Friday evening service: Lecha Dodi, a poem in which the sabbath is compared to a future bride who is attracted. This text is divided into stanzas, which are evident in the prayer books of all countries. The words "Lecha Dodi" are always repeated, musical joints to the preceding text. The Cantor starts the poem with the words "Lecha Dodi". […] I will be very happy if you can dedicate some time to be able to help me. It's very necessary that important Jewish composers give their attention to this art. I have often spoken of this with Mr Sem Dresden, the director of the Amsterdam Conservatoire, who was my former teacher, and he, too, wants to see this music at the highest level.
In the hope of being able to rely on your honoured cooperation and thanking you very much in advance,

Please accept my very best regards,

Yours,

Sim Gokkes[24]

Castelnuovo-Tedesco was obliging in this respect and went on to send Gokkes a draft of his work. Unfortunately, no copy of this is extant, but Gokkes replied on 8 May 1936 with a letter containing a detailed criticism of the sketch and how it may have been improved for the purpose of performance at the Portuguese Synagogue.

[24] Translation from French to English by Diana Castelnuovo-Tedesco.

Dear Mr Castelnuovo-Tedesco,

I was really delighted when I received your sketch. The composition in G minor not going higher than A is commendable. The text that I sent you is Ashkenazi. I enclose a Lecha Dodi by me from my collection of synagogue hymns, which is recited only by the Cantor. I've marked the accentuations with a red pencil. The text is Ashkenazi. The way that you continue after Sjabbat for the baritone (motif from the first tenor) is not permitted in Amsterdam.

The Rabbi of Amsterdam forbids the repetition of words. A composition is inspected by the Rabbi before the work is sung in the synagogue. That's why the composer is very bound in his way of writing. The repetition of the text Lecha Dodi by the Cantor in your example is not in accordance with the Askenazi rites. This text is first, sung once by the Cantor, then only the Chorus repeats Lecha Dodi and then sings the entire poem or sometimes some verses are with solos by the Cantor. It's always the habit that the Cantor repeats Bouie Wesjoloumwith accompaniment of the choir, with mouth closed, after which the choir sings as a finale the rule Lecha Dodi. At the same time, I send you an example of how it's sung by the Ashkenazi chorus. It's Lecha Dodi, a composition by me from 1923, one of my first compositions. You will notice that not a word is repeated. I will take the liberty of changing your sketch as it is desired here to give you a view of my goal.

I politely request, would you compose the start of the poem, that is to say, the text Lecha Dodi and at the end Bouie Wesjoloumafter this text is sung by the choir, for solo Cantor. It's because the Cantor of the Synagogue understands nothing about music. Bouie Wesjoloumsolo of the Cantor is accompanied by chorus with closed mouth.

In the meantime, I ask you to accept my most devoted regards

Yours

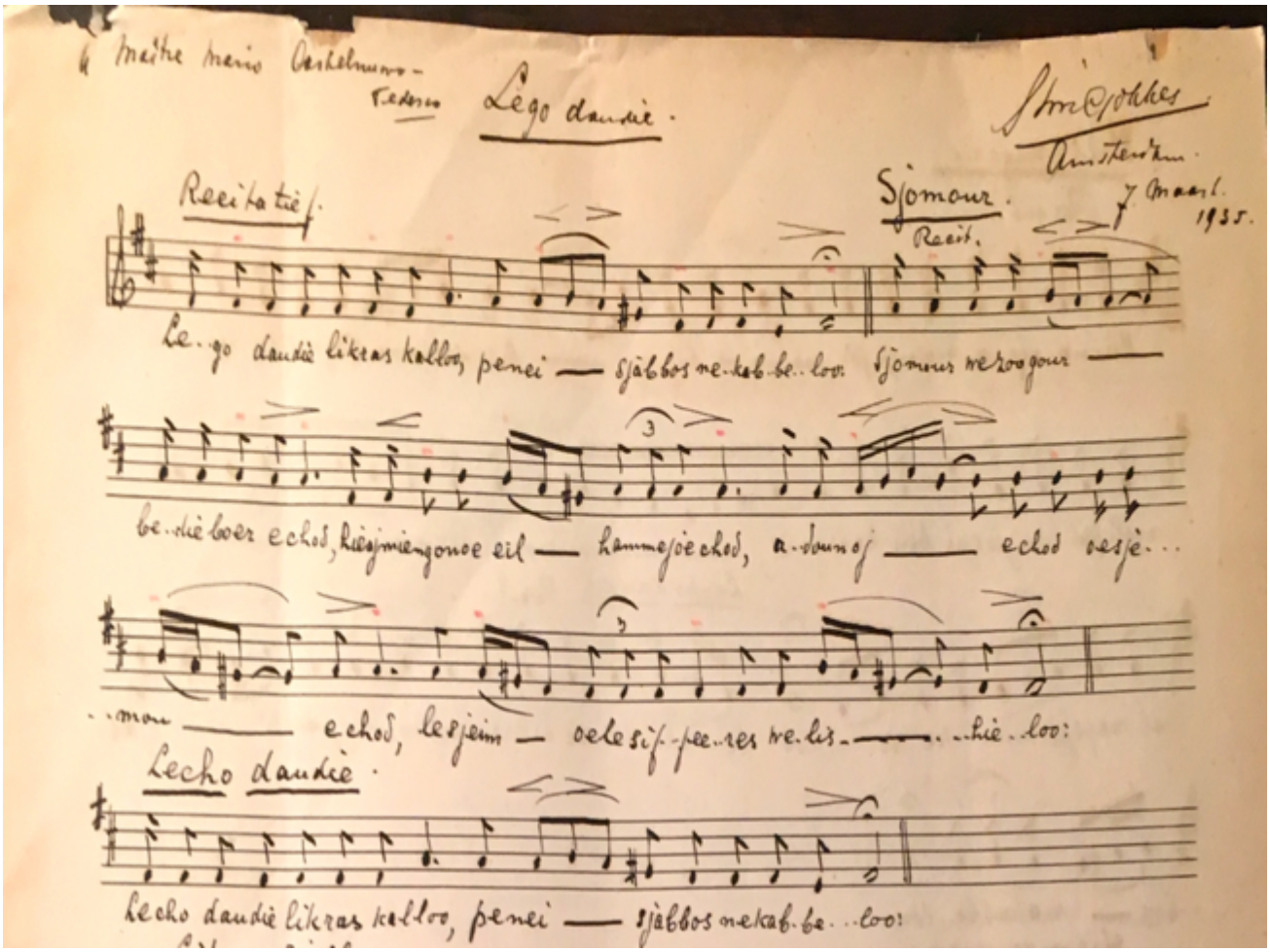
Sim Gokkes

P.S. You may keep the enclosed compositions as souvenirs.

Ex. 14 is an autographed excerpt from the original manuscript of the cantorial solo sent to Castelnuovo-Tedesco in 1936, along with a choral version written in 1935, which contained accentuations marked in red in later parts of it. In the top left-hand corner is Castelnuovo-Tedesco's name.

It is unclear if Castelnuovo-Tedesco's work was actually performed at the synagogue in Amsterdam, but it was later published, displaying all of the suggested amendments that we see in the letter from Gokkes. The manuscripts of both versions of *Lecha Dodi* sent by Gokkes were later included in *Sjire Kodesh,* his book of synagogue songs for the Friday evening and Sabbath morning services. It was published in 1937 by Broekmans & Van Poppel and contains a foreword by Sem Dresden in which he describes the music as 'new melodies old to the spirit, new to the letter' (Gokkes, 1937: 6). Gokkes also wrote an introduction section which implicitly lays out his reasons for composing the work in which he wrote: 'The publication of this collection is a modest attempt to break with the old routine in the field of synagogue music and to bring back the former synagogue song in a more modern form' (Gokkes, 1937: 6). This was a clear reference to his desire to compose a work incorporating a juxtaposition of traditional, 'pure' Jewish liturgical music combined with modern compositional techniques of that time. In fact, it was a theme that would also be repeated in many of his secular works. This musical epiphany was the result of Gokkes having studied Abraham Idelsohn's book *Jewish Music: Its Historical Development,* and consequently accepting Idelsohn's points of view in that Gokkes felt that synagogue music contained 'many elements that do not really belong in a synagogue: the influences of opera unmistakably present throughout; popular, sometimes even banal. Melodies are also unauthentic, and sometimes these are applied precisely where the prayers were to be heard in a very devotional mood' (Gokkes, 1937: 6). Gokkes wanted to reform synagogue music and make it evolve from the perspective of a modern composer, as a way of giving it a dignified future. He took ancient Jewish modes, melodies, and synagogue motifs, and

combined them with modern harmonies while trying as ‘much as possible to avoid all worldly influences’ (Gokkes, 1937: 6) This resulted in what was, for him, a very authentic-sounding synagogue music.



Ex. 14. Manuscript of Gokkes’s *Lecha Dodi* sent to Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco in 1936. Made available to the author by Diana Castelnuovo-Tedesco

The changes that he made to synagogue music were certainly innovative, and the fusion of old and new certainly help create the devotional mood and religious character that he strove for. However, contradiction is something that we have already encountered with Gokkes’s ideas and opinions, and within his own compositional oeuvre, he had achieved his goal of changing the course of the reforms of the nineteenth century by reverting to the use of authentic Jewish

melodies, but in the eyes of many, his own journey of reform may have been considered controversial with his use of thoroughly modernist harmonic structure built within a traditional generic scaffolding, a reform that traditionalists in the synagogue may have found equally inappropriate. The reviews in the media, however, were very positive, with S de Jong of the *Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad* dated May 12, 1939 writing that ‘the fact that Gokkes's collection may be called a remarkable enrichment in the general compositional field is not surprising to those who know of the acclaim the composer has previously harvested with various works, some of which has been awarded by prominent Dutch artists. His most recently published work, which we are allowed to announce here, is exuberantly praised in both domestic and foreign magazines by first-class craftsmen’ (de Jong, 1 December 1939: 5). With regards to the choral pieces of the collection, the critics weren’t quite so sure how the audience would react to the modernist aspects of the music, with de Jong quoting critic Wouter Paap who earlier wrote that ‘the choir compositions are distinguished by the richness of sound and rhythmic diversity [...]. Whether the Synagogue audience will appreciate this, so that Gokkes's work will take the deserved place in the Synagogue, only the future will tell’ (de Jong, 1 December 1939: 5).

Chapter Seven – Sim Gokkes: Westerbork and Auschwitz

'And God made man after His likeness.'
Did you know they would murder you and your kind?
That they would drive even the children
Into hiding and hunt them down.
And the patients. And the doctors.
All would be sent out on the Tuesday morning train.

(Hooker, 1994: 98)

It was not only Sim Gokkes who perished at the hands of the Nazis but also the whole of his immediate family. It is therefore important to dedicate some of this research to the events of this time.[25]

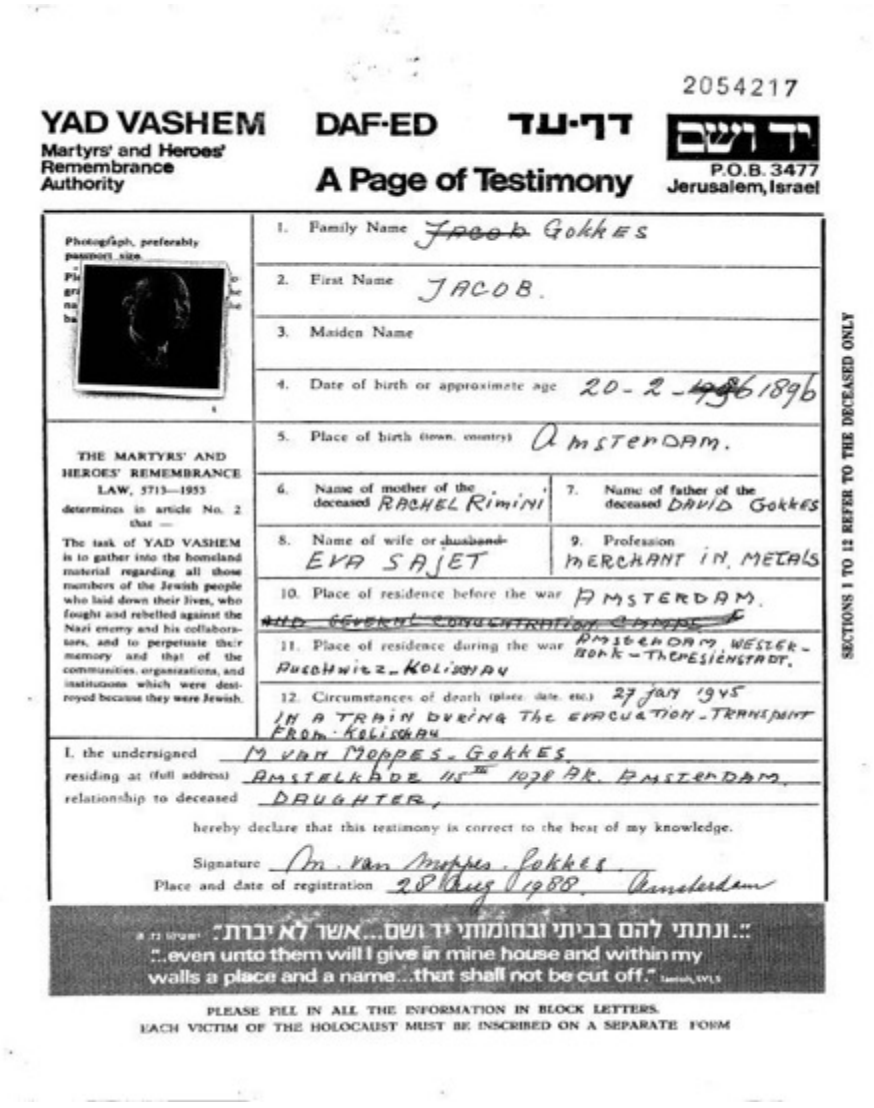
Simon Gokkes was born in Amsterdam on 21st March 1897 along with siblings Jacob, Joseph and Benjamin. His father, David Jacob Gokkes was born in Blokzijl, Overijssel in the Netherlands on 20th April 1861 and was an ironware salesman and street vendor by trade. David Gokkes's lineage can be traced back to his great, great grandfather Mozes David Gokkes born 1735 in Frankfurt, Germany. It was from this region that many Ashkenazi Jews migrated to Amsterdam in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. David's Ashkenazi background suggests that Sim's early childhood would have been far from privileged. David died in 1931.

Sim Gokkes's mother was Rachel Jechiel Rimini born 26 February 1864 in Amsterdam and whose lineage can be traced back to David Francisco Vieijra who was born in Faro, Portugal, 1622. During this period, the Iberian Sephardic Jews fled Spain and Portugal to avoid persecution during the inquisition, and most headed to Amsterdam which was renowned for its relative racial tolerance. Many of the Sephardic Jews were traders, and Amsterdam being a major trading city meant that the Sephardic Jews were able to contribute significantly to its wealth. This would all

[25] Genealogical information taken from www.ancestry.co.uk

suggest that Rachel's ancestors were possibly wealthy and influential in Amsterdam due to their commercial connections. Rachel died in Amsterdam in1934.

Jacob Gokkes was Sim's brother who was born February 20, 1896, in Amsterdam and whose occupation was a metal dealer. He spent time at several concentration/labour camps and died on January 27, 1945, whilst being transported by train from the Auschwitz sub-camp Golleschau, to Brněnec (formerly Brünnlitz) labour camp near Prague in Moravia, as illustrated in Ex.15.



2054217

YAD VASHEM
Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority

DAF-ED דף-עד

A Page of Testimony

יד ושם
P.O.B. 3477
Jerusalem, Israel

Photograph, preferably passport size

1. Family Name ~~Jacob~~ Gokkes
2. First Name JACOB.
3. Maiden Name
4. Date of birth or approximate age 20-2-~~1896~~ 1896
5. Place of birth (town, country) AMSTERDAM.
6. Name of mother of the deceased RACHEL Rimini
7. Name of father of the deceased DAVID Gokkes
8. Name of wife or ~~husband~~ EVA SAJET
9. Profession MERCHANT IN METALS
10. Place of residence before the war AMSTERDAM.
~~and different concentration camps~~
11. Place of residence during the war AMSTERDAM WESTERBORK - THERESIENSTADT. AUSCHWITZ - KOLISCHAU
12. Circumstances of death (place, date, etc.) 27 JAN 1945 IN A TRAIN DURING THE EVACUATION - TRANSPORT FROM KOLISCHAU

THE MARTYRS' AND HEROES' REMEMBRANCE LAW, 5713—1953 determines in article No. 2 that —

The task of YAD VASHEM is to gather into the homeland material regarding all those members of the Jewish people who laid down their lives, who fought and rebelled against the Nazi enemy and his collaborators, and to perpetuate their memory and that of the communities, organizations, and institutions which were destroyed because they were Jewish.

I, the undersigned M VAN MOPPES-GOKKES
residing at (full address) AMSTELKADE 115 III 1074 AK AMSTERDAM.
relationship to deceased DAUGHTER.
hereby declare that this testimony is correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature M. van Moppes-Gokkes
Place and date of registration 28 Aug 1988. Amsterdam

SECTIONS 1 TO 12 REFER TO THE DECEASED ONLY

ונתתי להם בביתי ובחומותי יד ושם... אשר לא יכרת :: ישעיה נו ה
"...even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name...that shall not be cut off." Isaiah, LVI, 5

PLEASE FILL IN ALL THE INFORMATION IN BLOCK LETTERS.
EACH VICTIM OF THE HOLOCAUST MUST BE INSCRIBED ON A SEPARATE FORM

Ex. 15. Jacob Gokkes, Holocaust Testimony. *Yad Vashem* [26]

[26] Testimony written in 1988 by Jacob Gokkes's daughter Mina Moppes-Gokkes for *Yad Vashem* Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority. Available at https://yvng.yadvashem.org/index.html?language=en&s_lastName=Gokkes&s_firstName=Jacob&s_place=&s_dateOfBirth=&cluster=true. [Accessed on 25 June 2020].

His is a tragic story as he was allocated to work at Brünnlitz by Oskar Schindler who owned the industrial site and sent over 1200 Jews there in order to save their lives. Schindler transported his Jewish workers there from Poland in 1944 on the pretext that they were skilled workers needed to manufacture ammunition for the German war effort. In reality, they were sent there to save them from death at the hands of the Nazis (Tait, 2016).

On January 21, 1945, more than a hundred Jews from the labour camp Golleschau, were loaded into cattle wagons and transported westwards without food and water. They travelled in temperatures so cold that the wagon doors had frozen shut. They were eventually abandoned on some sidings where many of the prisoners froze to death. Jacob Gokkes was one of the prisoners that perished.

The next oldest brother was Joseph Gokkes who was born November 26, 1898, in Amsterdam. Little is known about him, although we do know that he married Louisa van Geuns in 1922. Louisa was murdered 23 April 1943 in Sobibor concentration camp, Poland, and Joseph died 20 September 1938 in Berchem, Belgium before the German occupation of the Netherlands (Sassienie, 2014).

Benjamin Gokkes was the youngest of Sim's three siblings and was born 6 August 1905 in Amsterdam. He studied Romanesque Languages and Literature at Amsterdam University and passed his doctorate in French and Italian in 1931. Between 1941 and 1943 Benjamin was the rector of the Jewish Lyceum in Hertogenbosch, where he also taught French and Literature. In October 1942, Benjamin and his wife were arrested by the German Sicherheitsdienst (SD).[27] Eva was murdered in Auschwitz on 15 December 1942, and Benjamin met the same fate in Neukirch, Poland, on 8 March 1943 (Joodsmonument, 2016).

In 1922, Sim Gokkes married Rebecca Winnik who was born in Born, Netherlands on September 5, 1885. Like her husband, Rebecca was also a musician. In fact, they both taught privately at their house on Tilanustraat and advertised this in *Het Joodische Weekblad.* 'Sim Gokkes, R. Gokkes-Winnik, Diploma Conservatorium

[27] The SD was the intelligence branch of the SS with links to the Gestapo.

Amsterdam. Piano, Solfège, Harmonie, Compositie. Repertoirestudie, Opera, Oratorium. – Solzang. Meth. Spreken. Synagogale muziek. Opleiding voor Examens. TILANUSSTR. 78 – A'DAM-O', which translated into English reads: Sim Gokkes, R. Gokkes-Winnik, Diploma from the Amsterdam Conservatory. Piano, Solfa System, Harmony, Composing, Repertoire study, Opera, Oratorio. -Speaking method, Synagogue music, Preparation for Exams. This is followed by their address which was 78 Tilanusstraat, Amsterdam (*Het Joodsche weekblad*, 19 December 1941: 15).

They had two children, both born in Amsterdam, the oldest being David Jacob Gokkes, born November 23, 1928. He was known as 'Dete' to his friends at the Montessori school in South Amsterdam; the same school that the young diarist Anne Frank attended during the same period. The youngest child was Rachel Simona Gokkes, born 16 May 1937 and was merely 4 years old when she was sent to Westerbork. In 1941 the Niederländische Grundstückverwaltung (Dutch Estate Management Organisation), a German body, was 'authorized to take over all Jewish properties, or else authorize non-Jewish persons to do so' (Presser, 2010: 73). As a result, the Gokkes family were forced to move from their home on Tilanustraat to the 'Jewish neighbourhood' near the Nieuwmarkt. From there on 14 November 1942, they were all eventually taken to Westerbork to await deportation, or 'emigration', as the Nazis preferred to call it. Although deportation would have probably been inevitable at some point, in the case of Gokkes it was premature and was such that it must have caused Gokkes a great sense of guilt. Just before, he had observed a German soldier standing over his young daughter in the street causing Gokkes to assume that there were sinister motives involved. Gokkes intervened and began fighting with the soldier, resulting in his arrest and eventual deportation, along with his family, as a punishment for the incident (Moppes-Gokkes, 1995).

Before the German invasion of the Netherlands in 1940, many Jews in Amsterdam may have been aware of what was happening to other Jews at the hands of the Nazis across other parts of Europe, and as we shall shortly see, Gokkes had an opportunity to escape persecution. The Nazis were making their intentions very clear between 1933 and 1939, and Gokkes via his contact Geysel in Germany would probably have been aware of the establishment of the Reichsmusikkammer in 1933, resulting in the persecution of Jewish musicians. Also, in 1938, there was the

Entartete Musik touring exhibition in Dusseldorf and Weimar, as well as the German invasion and annexation of Austria known as the *Anschluss*. In that same year, German Jews were forced to assume compulsory middle names in the form of 'Israel' or 'Sara', and all passports of German Jews also had to be stamped with the letter 'J' in order to identify them as Jewish and hence prevent emigration. The end of 1938 saw the November Pogrom, or *Kristallnacht*, when Jewish owned shops and synagogues were looted with many Jews murdered and deported to concentration camps. 1939 then saw the invasions of Czechoslovakia and Poland, again resulting in mass persecution of Jews. All of this should have demonstrated to Dutch Jews that they may have eventually met the same fate, but as historian and head of the National Institute of War Documents Hans Blom suggested, 'Dutch Jewish integration may have given the Jewish community a "false sense of security" so that they were "less prepared" for what was to come during the Occupation' (Wolf, 2007: 92).

In that same year, 1939, Gokkes was contacted by a Jewish-Polish violinist by the name of Bronisław Huberman. Huberman is today considered to be the musical equivalent of Oskar Schindler in that he was responsible for saving the lives of an estimated one thousand Jews throughout the Holocaust period. He was acutely aware of increasing antisemitism in Germany and the fact that German-Jewish musicians were no longer allowed employment there. Thus, he formulated the idea of forming a new orchestra in Palestine and of giving these Jewish musicians the chance to escape persecution and once again perform in a top-class orchestra. Effectively, Huberman wanted to form an all-German Jewish orchestra that was ironically made possible by the actions of Hitler himself. He once said, 'can you imagine a pro-Jewish, pro-Zionist campaign more effective than the concert tour of a Palestine Orchestra? This will enhance the prestige of Jews all over the world' (Aronson and George, 2016: 191).

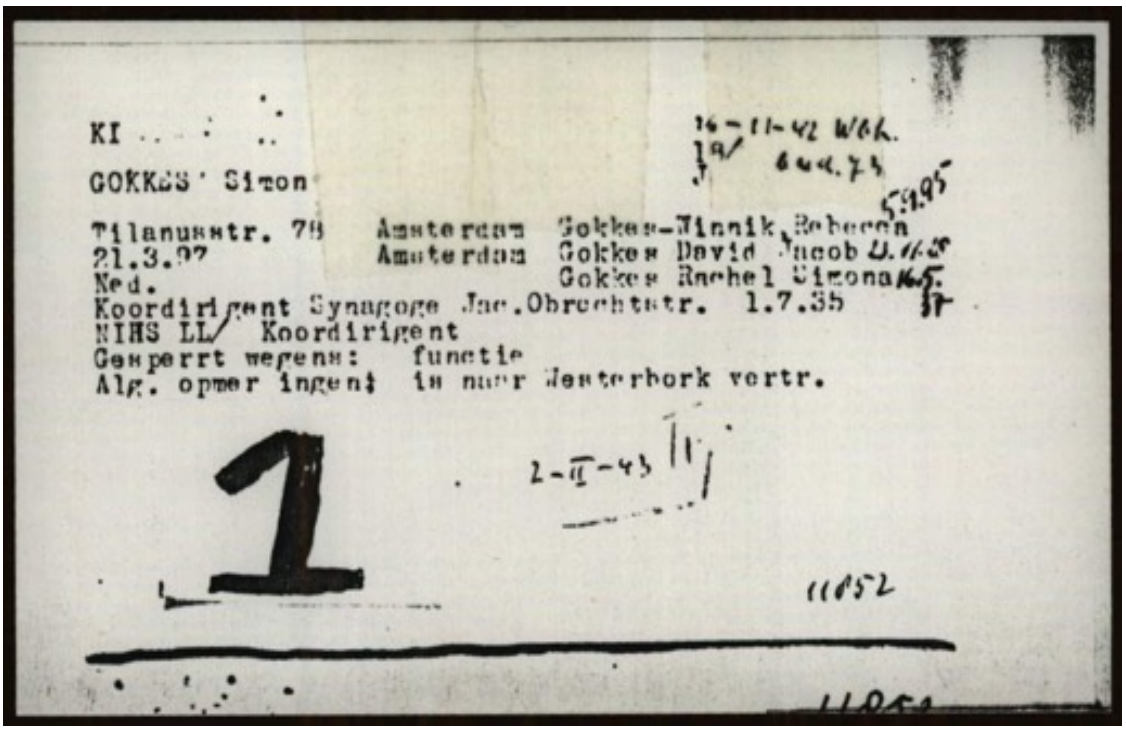
Initially, Huberman auditioned German Jews, but as the Nazi web spread across Europe he expanded his recruitment to Jewish musicians from other European countries including Austria, Poland, Hungary, and the Netherlands. In 1936 the Palestine Philharmonic Orchestra was born, later to become the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra twelve years later when the State of Israel was formed. The first concert

was 26 December 1936 and was conducted by Arturo Toscanini who, famously, had earlier refused to work in Germany as a protest against the Nazi regime.

In 1939 Huberman made contact with Gokkes, inviting him to take up the position of conductor with the orchestra in Tel Aviv, which was at the time part of British-administered Palestine. Gokkes considered the offer for a considerable length of time, weighing up all of the options. However, after much deliberation, he eventually declined the offer due to concerns for the welfare of his very young daughter. Had he realised what the effects of the impending German occupation of the Netherlands would have on its Jewish population, he would most certainly have made a different decision, and he and his family would have likely survived the war (Moppes-Gokkes, 1995).

Sim Gokkes was finally arrested and taken to Westerbork transit camp where he arrived on November 16, 1942. As can be seen in Ex. 16 and Ex. 17, which are copies of original documents provided for the service by the ITS (International Tracing Service) in Germany, the Nazi-controlled Jewish Council kept meticulous records[28] of prisoners' time while awaiting deportation to numerous concentration camps.

[28] The location of the ITS, International Tracing Service, Bad Arolsen, Germany. It houses the Arolsen Archives – International Centre on Nazi Persecution and archives information relating to the victims of Nazi persecution.



KI

GOKKES Simon

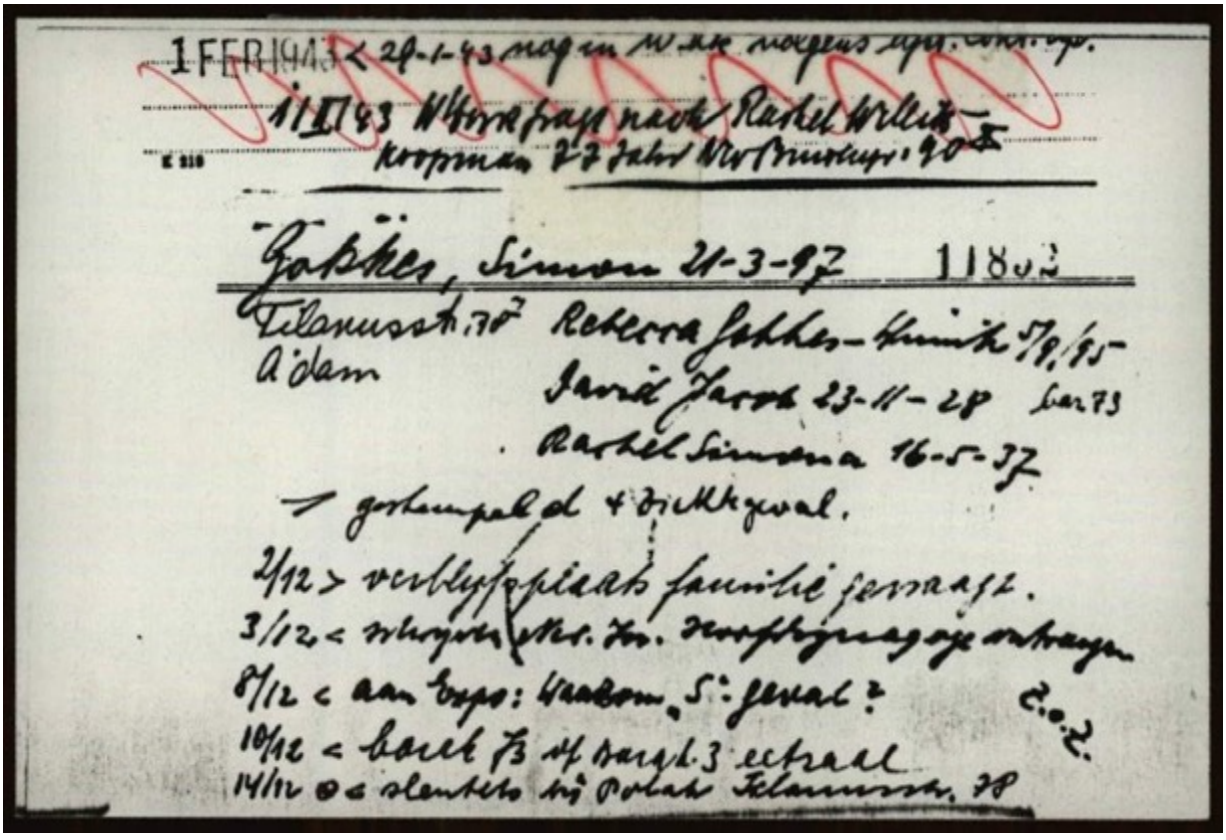
Tilanusstr. 78 Amsterdam Gokkes-Minnik Rebecca
21.3.97 Amsterdam Gokkes David Jacob
Ned. Gokkes Rachel Simona
Koordirigent Synagoge Jac.Obrechtstr. 1.7.35
NIHS LL/ Koordirigent
Gesperrt wegens: functie
Alg. opmer ingen: is naar Westerbork vertr.

1

2-II-43

11852

Ex. 16. Jewish Council records card 1. Sim Gokkes



1 FEB 1943 < 29-1-43 nagezonden aan Verzorgingsdienst.

11-II-43 Uitkrijgen naar Rachel Willis-
koopman 23 Jahre Wohnungsp. 90

Gokkes, Simon 21-3-97 11852
Tilanusstr. 78 Rebecca Gokkes-Minnik 78/95-
A'dam Jacob Gokkes 23-11-28 bar 73
Rachel Simona 16-5-37
1 gestempeld + stilkgaal.
2/12 > verblijfsplaats familie gevraagd.
3/12 < Uitgeschr. Gem. Verzorgingsdienst ontvangen
8/12 < aan Insp: Vraagt. 5: gaat?
10/12 < bericht 73 uit Barg. 3 ontvangen
14/12 < slentelt bij Polak Tilanusstr. 78

Ex. 17. Jewish Council records card 2. Sim Gokkes

In Ex. 16 (card 1) we can see the following information:

- Name, address, and names of other members of the family. Their last address was Tilanusstraat 78, Amsterdam.
- Occupation states that he was choir director of the Synagogue in the Jacob Obrechtstraat, a position held from July 1, 1935.
- There is a reference to 'NIHS' which meant that Sim was a member of the Orthodox Jewish community.
- 'Algemene opmerkingen' ('general remarks') – he was sent to Westerbork.
- In the top right-hand corner of the card, we see 14-11-42, which was the date he was sent to Westerbork.
- Below that, Brk 73, which was the number of his allocated barrack.
- There is also written 'gesperrt wegens: functie' which translates into 'suspended/blocked: function', but it is not clear what this specifically refers to.

Ex. 17 (card 2) starts with some of the same details as Ex. 16, and above the dates it states that Gokkes was stamped as a sickness case. Below that, entries are logged by date:

- 2/12 – requested residence of family presumably so that they could be together.
- 3/12 – information about his synagogue was requested.
- 8/12 – it mentions the word 'Expo' which is an abbreviation for Expositur. The Expositur was a department of the Jewish Council which processed the registration of exemptions from deportation (sperre).

As we saw earlier, the Jewish Council of Amsterdam was an organisation run by Jewish citizens, imposed by the Nazi military regime in November 1941, and its remit was to deal with the Jewish population with regards to its continued social exclusion as well as their eventual identification and deportation. The Jewish Council also distributed the yellow Star of David badges and ensured that the Jewish population

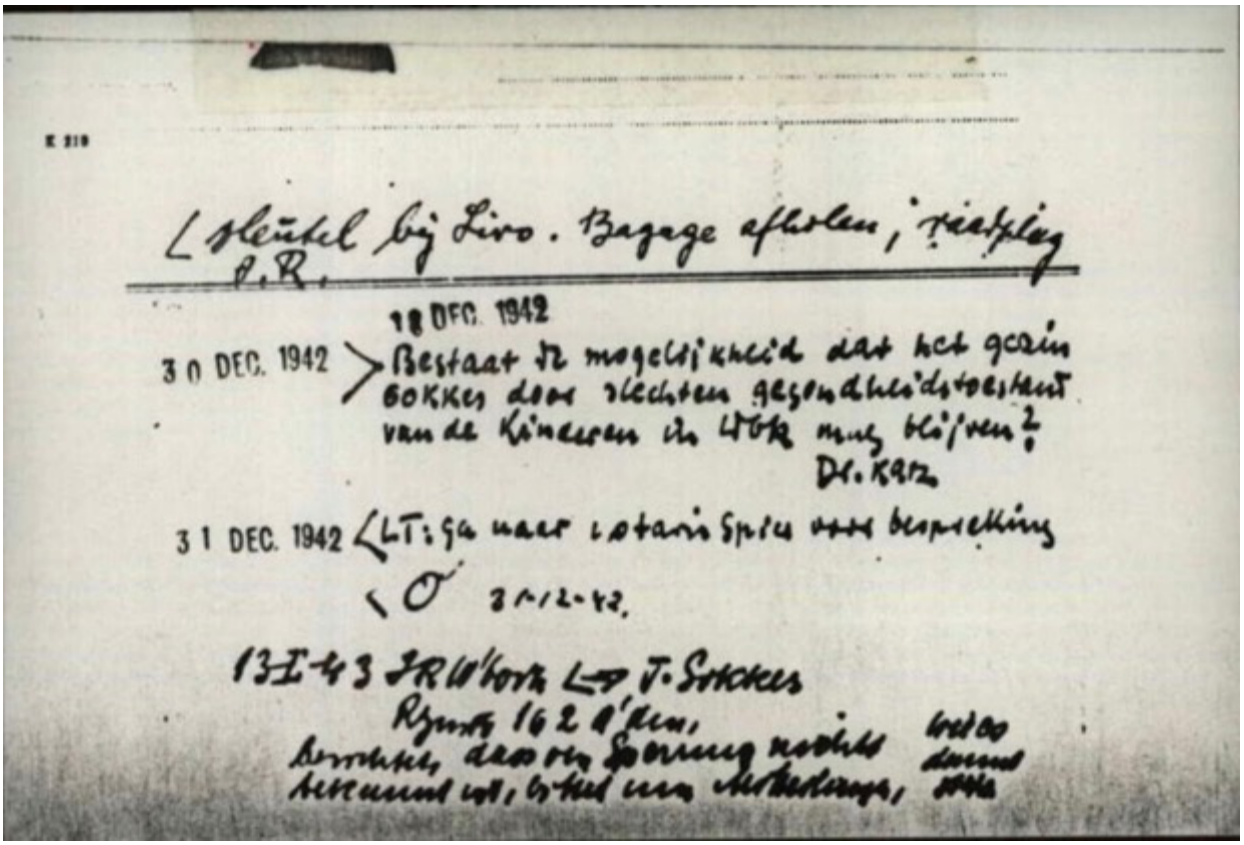
wore them at all times as an easy method of identification and stigmatisation. The council was headed by Professor David Cohen and Abraham Asscher, who were both convinced that they were actually helping the Jews despite the above role that they had played (Presser, 2010: 247). The Expositur was headed by an Austrian Jew by the name of Dr Edwin Sluzker, and because of his Austrian dialect and his therefore ability to understand German orders and terminology on German forms, combined with his unobtrusive manner, Sluzker was able to communicate well with Aus der Fünten who was head of the Zentralstelle, the Central Office for Jewish Emigration. Consequently, Sluzker was able to achieve many concessions with regards to deportations by granting exemptions, hence saving many Jews from imminent death (Presser, 2010: 246).

There were sometimes other ways to obtain an exemption: these could possibly have been explored by Sim Gokkes who was regarded as a very well-respected musician in Amsterdam. There was the possibility of asking for the intervention of key cultural figures. For example, Mischa Hillesum, a Dutch Jewish pianist/composer mentioned earlier, was the brother of Etty Hillesum, the author of several books including *Letters from Westerbork*, a diary describing her own time at Westerbork. She wrote to her friend Milli Ortmann and urged her to contact Willem Mengelberg with a view to asking him to make a recommendation on behalf of her brother to Albin Rauter, the highest-ranking SS officer in the occupied Netherlands. In her letter, she wrote ‘dear Milli, […] The Jewish Council thinks it imperative that you pursue the Barneveld option strenuously with the Zenralstelle on behalf of Mischa and the family (remember, not me!), and urges you to do so. Perhaps you will still be able to get Mengelberg to intervene personally with Rauter. Suddenly it’s all coming to an end’ (Hillesum, 1986: 57).

Mengelberg was certainly a man with influence and the plan worked partially. Although Mischa wasn’t actually granted a full exemption, there were several concessions granted to make his life more bearable during his incarceration. We do not know for certain if this was an avenue pursued by Gokkes who probably by now had an idea of his impending fate. He would, however, have been aware that in quite a number of cases these exemptions were being granted by the Expositur. His main

hope was to be granted such an exemption in order to save his family from deportation to a concentration camp and the gas chambers.
In Ex. 16 we also see the following information:

- Next to ‘Expo’ we see the letter ’S’ which stands for straf (punishment). This informs us that Gokkes would have been confined to the punishment barracks and would have had to wear a special white armband with the letter ’S’. These prisoners were subjected to special punishment. It is likely that he was placed in the punishment barracks as a result of the earlier mention altercation with a German soldier in Amsterdam.
- 10/12 – he was assigned to barracks 73. At this point, he must have been released from the punishment barracks.
- 14/12 – the keys to his property in Amsterdam were with someone with the surname Polak. The house number 78 is on the same street, so presumably with his neighbour.

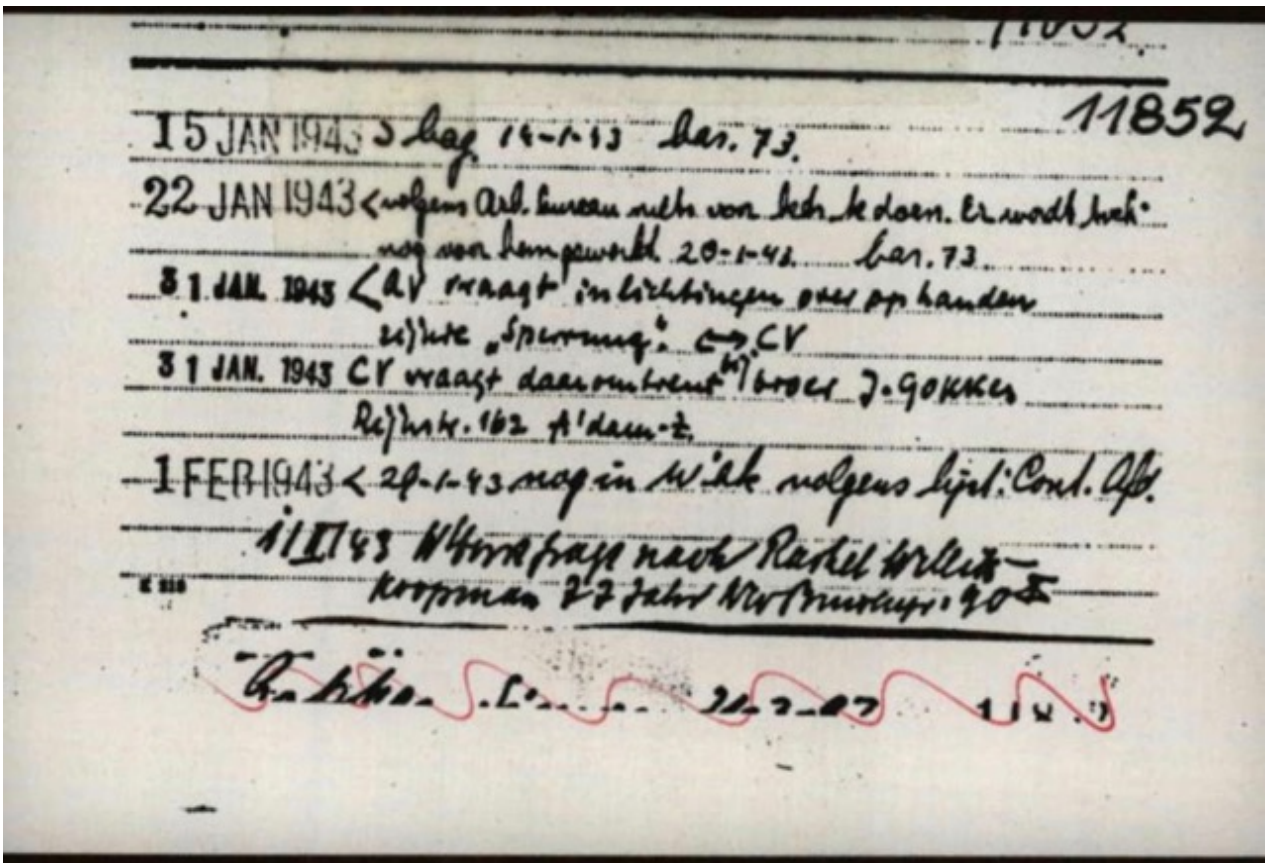


Ex. 18. Jewish Council record card 3

At the top of the card in Ex. 18, it states that the key is with LIRO, and that luggage is still to be picked up. The reference to LIRO is interesting as it was another name for the Dutch Jewish bank Lippman, Rosenthal and Co. which had a branch on the Sarphatistraat in Amsterdam. This particular branch of the bank was used by the Nazi Government in Germany, and its role was for the looting of valuable possessions belonging to the Dutch Jewish population of Amsterdam once they had been arrested and sent to Westerbork. Jews also had to voluntarily deposit valuables such as art collections and jewellery. After high-ranking Nazis had taken their pick, many of the valuables were sold to finance the running of Westerbork, and any important art was sent to art galleries in Germany (Arian, 1997).

Again, entries are dated and contain the following information:

- 30 Dec. 1942: because of the ill health of the children there is a request asking if would be possible for the Gokkes family to remain at Westerbork.
- This is signed by Dr Katz. Again, Sim Gokkes seems to be exploring every avenue in order to avoid him and his family being deported.
- 31 Dec. 1942: it indicates that this request will go to a notary for discussion in a meeting.
- 13 Jan. 1943: there is mention of sperre which was an exemption from deportation or forced labour until further notice. However, in German, it also states that nothing is known about that request at that time.



Ex. 19. Jewish Council record card 4

The card in Ex. 19 is unfortunately mostly illegible, but there is nonetheless some important information there. In the entry dated 31 January 1943, it mentions that a sperre is about to be given. This would not have been a guarantee however, as even in these cases deportations could often happen at very short notice. In Etty Hillesum's last diary entry before her death at Auschwitz, on a card that she threw out of a deportation train on September 7, she wrote: 'Christine, […]. In the end, the departure came without warning. On sudden special orders from The Hague. We left the camp singing, Father and Mother firmly and calmly, Mischa too. We shall be travelling for three days. Thank you for all your kindness and care. Friends left behind will still be writing to Amsterdam; perhaps you will hear something from them. Or from my last letter from Camp. Good-bye for now from the four of us. Etty' (Hillesum, 1986: 146).

With a similar lack of warning, two days later Sim Gokkes, his wife Rebecca, along with their two children David and Simona, were deported to Auschwitz concentration camp. They were all murdered in the gas chambers on February 5, 1943.

Danuta Czech, one-time Deputy Director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum and author of the *Auschwitz Chronicle 1939-1945* gives this information about that particular transport:

> **4 II 1943** (Thursday) 890 Jews, 321 men and boys and 569 women and girls, arrived from Westerbork with an RSHA transport from Holland. Following the selection, 48 men, given numbers 99867-99914 and 52 women, given numbers 34126-34177, are admitted to the camp. The other 790 people, including invalids and children, are killed in the gas chambers.[29]

[29] This information was supplied via email from www.auschwitz.com

Part Three

The Compositions of Sim Gokkes

Records indicate that Gokkes wrote a total of approximately forty-five compositions, most of which were looted and destroyed by the Nazis. Only thirteen of them, including *Sjire Kodesh*, survive and are archived at the Netherlands Music Institute. Three of them exist in published form. We can identify the names and formats of several other compositions from information in period newspapers, but sadly, most have been lost. Below is a list of both his lost and surviving works:

Lost works:

Suite for Orchestra

Shéhérazade for orchestra

Exodus – Oratorio for choir, orchestra, tenor, bass-baritone, and speaking voice

Kajin for male choir

Marche Triomphale for large orchestra

Adoun Ngoulom for mixed choir, baritone, and orchestra

Koul Sjofar composed for a children's choir

Betsalel, an adaptation of the traditional Rosh Hasjonoh melody on a text by Dr M. de Hond for children's choir and piano

Surviving works:

Psalm 130 (1925) for male choir

Twee Hebreeuwse liederen (1926) for soprano or tenor and piano

C'en est fait (1928) for soprano or tenor and piano

De Pelgrim voor Jeruzalem (1928) for soprano or tenor and piano

Duiven (1928) for soprano or tenor and piano

Kaddisch (1928) for voice and piano

Kermesse d'été (1928) for soprano or tenor and piano

Kinah (1928) for two soprano voices, alto, tenor, baritone, flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, bassoon, and piano. Published by Donemus, Amsterdam, 2006

La lune blanche luit dans les bois (1928) for soprano or tenor and piano

Psalm 92, *Tsaddik Kattomor* for male choir

Sjire Kodesh (1937) for vocal ensemble and piano. Published by Broekmans en Van Poppel, Amsterdam, 1937

Sonatine voor piano (1939) for piano. Published by Donemus, Amsterdam, 1997

Chapter Eight – The Lost Works

There is very little information available about the works of Gokkes that were destroyed, and in fact, we are unable to list them chronologically due to a lack of information relating to actual composition (and/or performance) dates. Some newspaper articles are invaluable in tracking Gokkes's career, including the ones that describe a number of concerts of Gokkes's music that were organised by Maneto, an organisation also known in full as Manifestaties van Nederlandse Toonkunst (Manifestations of Dutch Music). Maneto was an initiative instigated in 1937 by GeNeCo – the Genootschap van Nederlandse Componisten *(*Association of Dutch Composers) under its president Jan van Gilse. along with other committee members Paul F. Sanders, Bertus van Lier and publisher Johan Alsbach (Grijp, 2002: 542), GeNeCo strove 'to make Dutch music more widely known, set criteria for the professional competence of composers, protect their work and create a social safety net' (Nieuwgeneco, 2015).

Maneto was in turn funded by another organisation BUMA, (Bureau voor Muzikale Auteursrechten*,* the' Bureau for Musical Copyright'). BUMA was a newly formed Dutch musical copyright agency again formed by Jan van Gilse sometime just after 1911. It was an organisation that he was also president of for several years. Composers could now register the copyright of their compositions in the Netherlands and so BUMA can be seen as one of the political moves instigated to try to protect the rights of composers. The funds raised from the Maneto concerts were used for the positive purpose of enriching various cultural activities in the Netherlands. The concerts did, however, provide a high-profile platform which gave young composers such as Gokkes the golden opportunity to create a positive reputation for themselves. From 1937 to 1940 there were four Maneto concerts per year that promoted the works of many young contemporary composers of that time. These concerts were well attended, and the media were very positive about them (Grijp, 2002: 542). Part of Maneto's remit was also to organise open rehearsals in which some of the repertoire to be performed was publicly rehearsed by the composers themselves resulting in a concert for the general public.

Gokkes's main compositional output was works for voice, either solo or choral, so it is interesting to note that as part of the Maneto series of concerts he had several orchestral works performed. The first was the Suite for Orchestra*,* which like many of his other existing works was based on a set of Jewish themes (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad,* 15 February 1929: 14). We know from an article in the *Nieuw Israelaetisch weekblad*, 4 July 1930, that it was performed by the Haarlem Symphony Orchestra, and two of the movements were entitled *Mélodie Hebraïque* and *Danse Oriëntale.* From an earlier edition of the same newspaper dated 15 February 1929, there is also a reference to another movement with the title *Inter dem Kinds wiegeie*, a (Yiddish) East-Jewish folk song in the form of a lullaby.

Gokkes's suite shared the Haarlem concert programme with *Le Carnival Romain* by Berlioz, and Henri Rabaud's *La Procession Nocturne* (Symphony No. 2) and compared with the two French works Gokkes's work represented 'a huge leap in the modern direction, with the *Mélodie Hebraïque* movement having a certain mood-raising and even enchanting sound' (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 4 July 1930: 3). The same article also gives us a brief insight into Gokkes's style in the work which describes a 'good balance of content, form and sound distribution' (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 4 July 1930: 3) along with the positive effect created by the use of counterpoint and imitation in the opening Prélude movement. It also contained varied rhythms and metre in the other movements, a trait that is evident in many of his other works with Gokkes's use of frequent time signature changes, syncopation, and short, unpredictable rhythmic ideas. An example of this can be seen later in Ex. 33. There is no existing evidence of Gokkes's orchestral scoring, but the orchestration was singled out as the best feature of the work, particularly the 'original way in which he used the horns' (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 4 July 1930: 3).

Another of his now lost orchestral works performed at one of the Maneto concerts was *Shéhérazade.* This concert was performed 30 June 1940 by the Utrecht Stedelijk Orkest at the Tivoli concert hall in Utrecht and was conducted by Willem van Otterloo (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 28 June 1940: 6). There are no previous mentions of this work in earlier publications, so we can assume that it was one of his later works. Interestingly, it appears that it is most of these late works that have been destroyed or lost, possibly because their scores were yet to be published or archived

and were still in Gokkes's possession when he was deported. Van Otterloo was a highly respected young conductor who specialised in conducting nineteenth and twentieth-century music, and this was probably why he was selected by Maneto to lead these concerts. He had an illustrious career, having recorded works with both the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonic Orchestras, and later in 1971 went on to become chief conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in Australia (Northey, 2002).

Shéhérazade is unique as it is one of Gokkes's few works to seemingly be based on a non-Jewish theme. The original story is that of a Persian Sultan who was of the view that all women were unfaithful to their husbands. His solution to this was to slay each of his many wives after the first night of marriage, hence avoiding infidelity. When he eventually married the Sultana Shéhérazade, she devised a survival plan where she told the Sultan a tale every night for one thousand and one nights. The Sultan was so enthralled by these tales that he postponed her death on a nightly basis (Sallis, 1998: 153). This story has no obvious link to Judaism but in her book *By a Thread*, Lynne Avadenka draws some interesting feminist parallels between the stories of Shéhérazade and Esther in the story of Purim. Esther was the Jewish queen of the Persian king Xerxes I, and like Shéhérazade, had been chosen from a harem, and was the wife of a king who had previously been betrayed. Both women's lives were in danger from their respective husbands, but they both stood up for themselves and others and saved lives (Brawarsky, 2007). In the story of Esther, she convinced her cousin Mordecai to 'persuade the king to retract an order for the general annihilation of Jews throughout the empire. The massacre had been plotted by the king's chief minister, Haman, and the date decided by casting lots (Purim). Instead, Haman was hanged on the gallows he built for Mordecai, and, on the day planned for their annihilation, the Jews destroyed their enemies' (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020b). Bearing this comparison in mind, it could be feasible that Gokkes had drawn the same conclusion with these two parallel narratives, and that his orchestral work *Shéhérazade* could possibly have had an underlying synonymous Jewish theme.

Shéhérazade was a popular theme amongst other composers and Gokkes would probably have been aware of Rimsky Korsakov's version of 1888, and also the opera in three acts by German-Jewish composer Bernhard Sekles (1917). Rimsky-

Korsakov's orchestration was very influential throughout Europe in the early twentieth century, impressing both Debussy (Myers, 1958: 338) and Ravel (Kelly, 2001). So, bearing in mind Gokkes's apparent strength in the field of orchestration, along with the influence he received from both Ravel and Debussy, it is also possible that Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sheherazade,* with its lavish orchestration, may have been influential in Gokkes's choice of subject matter.

In the opinion of Max Vredenburg, Gokkes's greatest work was the oratorio *Exodus*, although it is unclear if the work was ever performed. Vredenburg was aware of the work as prior to writing his article he had studied a copy of the full score, at which point the work hadn't been publicly performed (Vredenburg, 1931). It was a large work consisting of a score of almost two hundred pages and was scored for choir, full orchestra, solo tenor, solo bass-baritone, and speaking voice (Vox Deï) (Vredenburg, 1 May 1931: 98). The work consisted of a musical setting of Biblical scenes from the Book of Exodus, which is also the second book of the Torah, 'consisting of the narratives of Israel in Egypt (Exodus 1 – 15:21), Sinai and the Covenant (Exodus 15:22 – 24:18), and Sanctuary and the New Covenant (Exodus 25:1 – 40:38)' (Meyers, 2005: 1-20). A brief synopsis of the narrative is a description of how the Jews, who were living as slaves under the Pharaoh in Egypt, were eventually led out of slavery to God's promised Holy Land by their leader, a man named Moshe Rabbenu (Moses in the English language). God helped Moses and the Jews throughout their journey, including the parting of the Red Sea.

The escape of the Jews from slavery in Egypt is commemorated by Jews in the festival of Passover. They eventually reached Mount *Sinai* where God spoke to Moses, making a covenant with the Jews and giving Moses *Torah*, or law, which included the Ten Commandments as a guide to the way God wanted the Jews to live from that point on. Torah was not only the Ten Commandments as we know them, but it was also a form of authoritative teaching and guidance amounting to a total of six hundred and thirteen commandments covering all aspects of life including amongst other things diet and hygiene. Meyers sums up the narrative by writing that Exodus 'begins with the Israelites subjected to forced service to a human ruler; and it ends with their willing service to a divine sovereign' (Meyers, 2005: 1-20).

As we can see, the subject matter that Gokkes used as the basis for his oratorio is large and loaded with narrative content; it was a gigantean story with the deployment of similar-sized musical forces to match. We have no records of any performances, but as we have already seen, Max Vredenburg had obviously studied the score and was able to give us a brief insight into its form and content. He later wrote in his article on the music of Gokkes in *Ha'ischa,* that 'the music follows the action fairly accurately and has therefore been treated several times in an illustrative manner, which is also my objection, as it did not achieve the desired result everywhere. By the way, one can imagine this work from the notes on the paper. There are wonderful moments of intense force and a spirit of humility mixed with an intense vibrancy exudes from this score. The work has never been done!' (Vredenburg, 1 May 1931: 98).

Gokkes's only other lost work which was written solely for full orchestra was his *Marche Triomphale*, which along with another set of songs with text written by Jeduha Halevie, was announced as a new composition in the press in 1927 (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad,* 1 July 1927: 2). Most of his other lost works were small in scale and mainly dominated by the male-voice choir format. According to Vredenburg 'in this genre Gokkes shows himself to be a great connoisseur of the polyphonic style in the way that he uses it' (Vredenburg, 1 May 1931: 98). His use of harmony was generally modernistic, as was his very effective use of musical effects, such as frequent metre changes, use of free rhythms, and vocal accompaniments with half-closed mouths. Gokkes also wrote several other choral works, comprising of an *Adoun Ngoulom* for mixed choir, baritone, and orchestra, and *Koul Sjofar* for children's choir and piano which was an adaptation of the traditional *Rosh Hasjonoh* melody on a text by Dr. M. de Hond (Vredenburg, 1 May 1931: 98).

Chapter Nine – The Surviving Works

Thankfully, a number of Gokkes's important works have survived and are archived at the Netherlands Music Institute in The Hague. On close inspection of these works, it is evident that they contain several eclectic influences, both directly and indirectly, mainly of the French composers Debussy, Ravel, and Milhaud, as well as Stravinsky. Having given context to these influences earlier in the present thesis, I will attempt in this chapter to provide a brief cultural analysis of these surviving works, and in a selection of them, I will also attempt to provide a clearer picture of the external stylistic influences of the above-mentioned composers, along with Gokkes's continued reference to Judaism in his music.

The first of Gokkes's surviving works is Psalm 130, a work for male choir written in 1925. This exists in published form since it was eventually incorporated into his volume of synagogue works *Sjire Kodesh.* After this, his first work not to be included in the volume was his work for voice and piano, *Twee Hebreeuwse liederen,* composed in February 1926. This work was performed abroad several times, including 13 January 1932, after the Nederlandsche Vereeniging voor Hedendaagshe Muziek (Dutch Association of Contemporary Music) had nominated it for possible selection to be performed at a Dutch international exchange concert in Madrid, Spain. The piece was eventually successfully selected by a Spanish panel consisting of several eminent Spanish composers of the time, including Conrado del Campo, Joaquin Turina, and Bartholomé Peréz Casas (*Arnhemsche courant*, 7 January 1932: 2). The work was also performed on 7 April 1928, at the Salle Pleyel in Paris, with singer Lotti Muskens-Sleurs singing, and piano accompaniment provided by the composer himself. Both international performances were highly acclaimed (*Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 27 April 1928: 14).
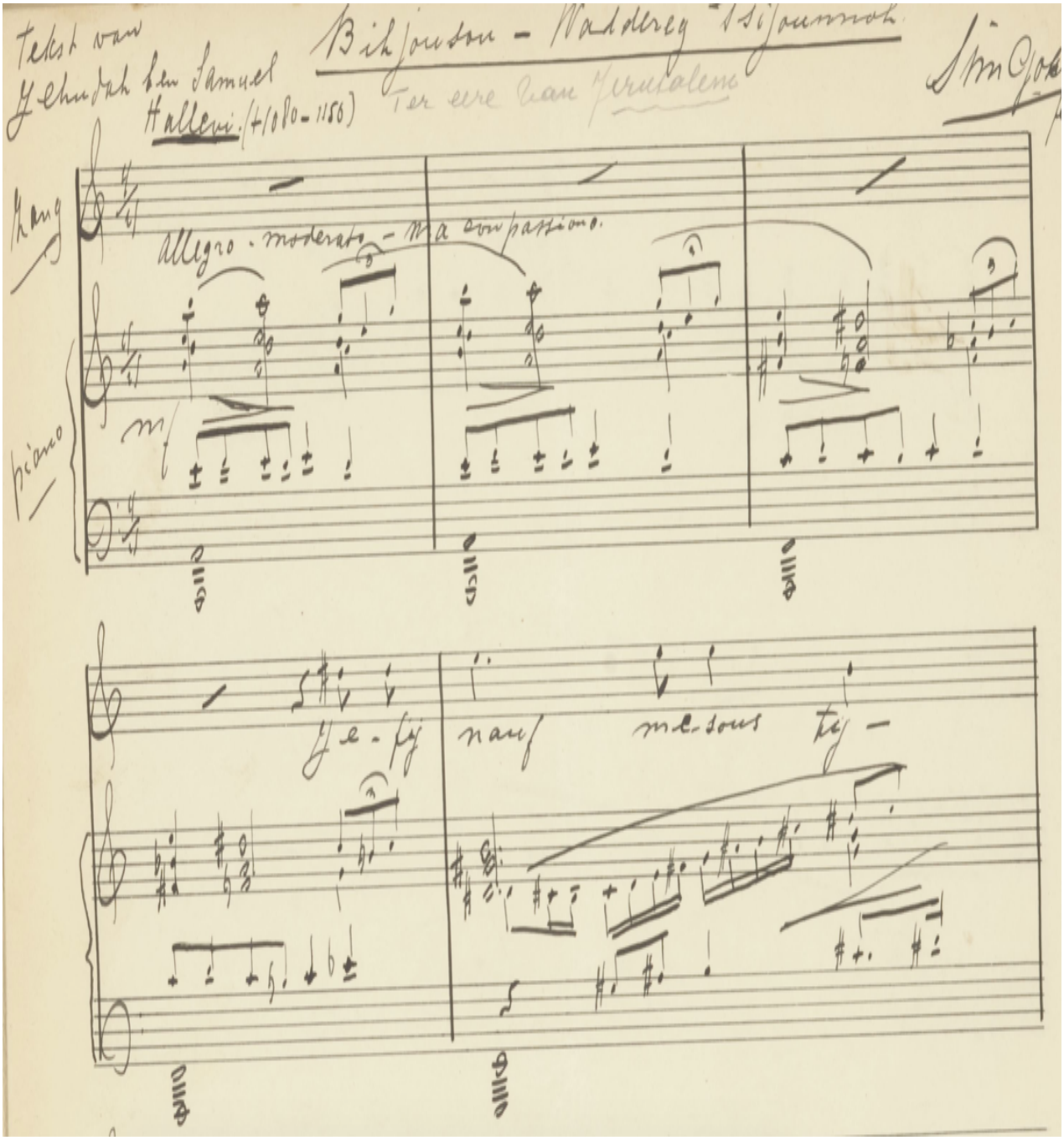
The work itself has a Jewish theme as it is based on two Hispano-Hebrew poems written by Yehuda Halevi (c. 1075-1141), a medieval Spanish-Jewish physician, philosopher and poet. The first of the poems used in Gokkes's songs is *To Jerusalem*, and the second is *My Heart is in the East* (Halevi and Halkin, 2011). The first song, *To Jerusalem* is based on a text that is a romantic love poem, where the

theme of romance and love is intertwined with the idea of one's yearning to end Jewish exile.

Oh fair of view! World's joy! Great Monarch's home!
For you, from earth's far end, my spirit yearns.
Compassion stirs in me when my mind turns
To your lost cloister and its splendour's doom.
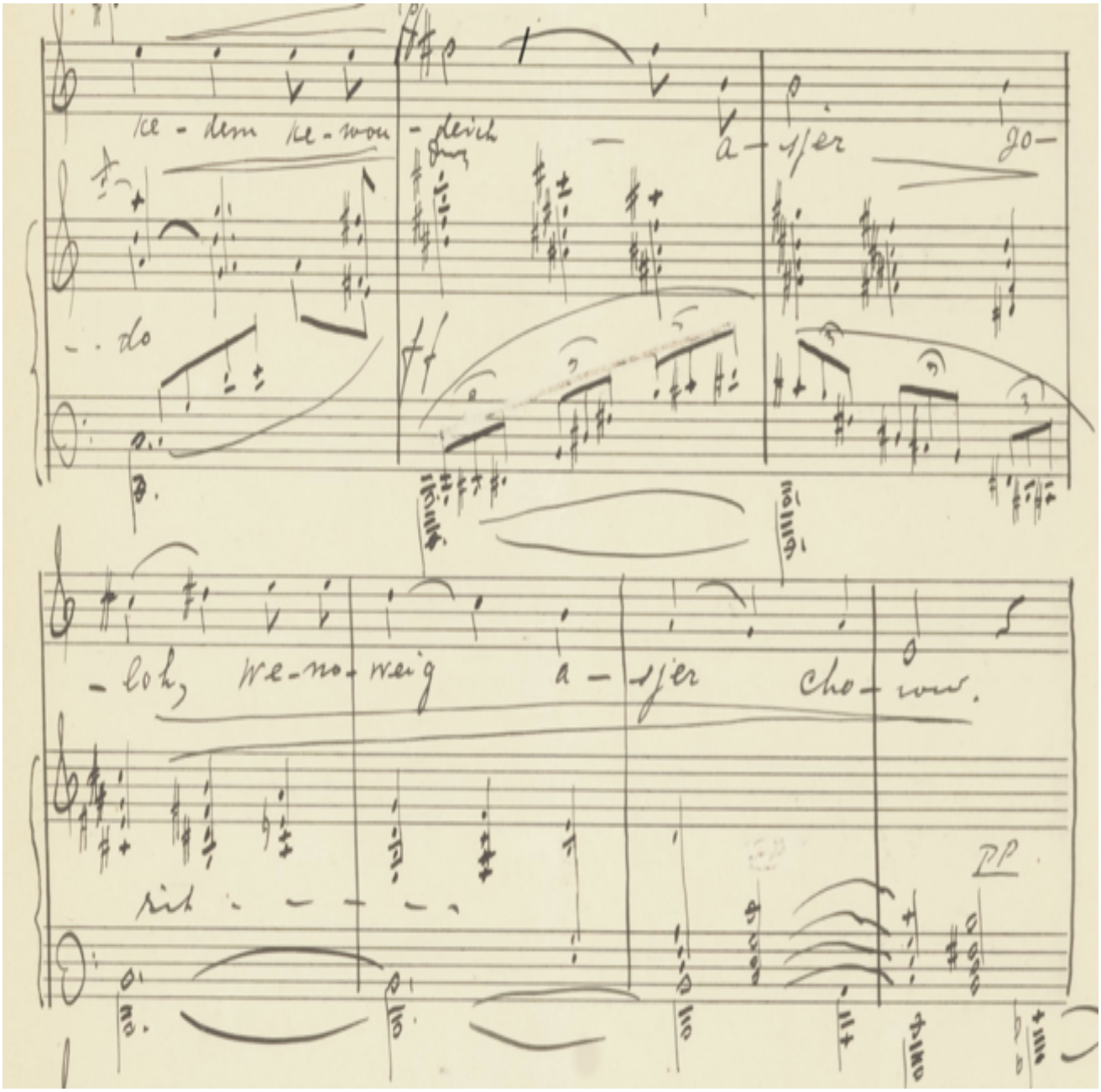
(Halevi and Halkin, 2011)

In line with the opening words of the poem, the opening piano section of the song is declamatory in nature, dramatic, and charged with passion; one can sense the subject's yearning for his/her homeland. To convey an impression of this passion Gokkes uses chromaticism with the chords in the piano right-hand descending in parallel by a semitone in bars 3-5, along with the use of a 9-8 'sigh' like appoggiatura in the first two bars, then becoming a (non-resolving) 7-#6 appoggiatura in bars 4-5. Gokkes's downward resolving appoggiatura motif becomes a feature in the piano accompaniment throughout the whole song, enabling the feeling of passion to be maintained throughout. Also, he bases his tonality in A minor, occasionally using various modes such as the Lydian mode (with a raised fourth) in the accompaniment in bar five. This is illustrated in Ex.20 below.



Ex.20. The opening bars of *To Jerusalem* demonstrating the use of the minor key

Gokkes's use of harmony in this song shows very little of the obvious modernist touches displayed in some of his later works: the frequent use of bitonality, for example, and the dissonant clash of major/minor seconds used in tandem. Here, the use of harmony is more straightforward, although there is clear evidence of the influence of Debussy with the use of parallel chords descending in the piano right-hand as illustrated in the second bar of Ex. 21.

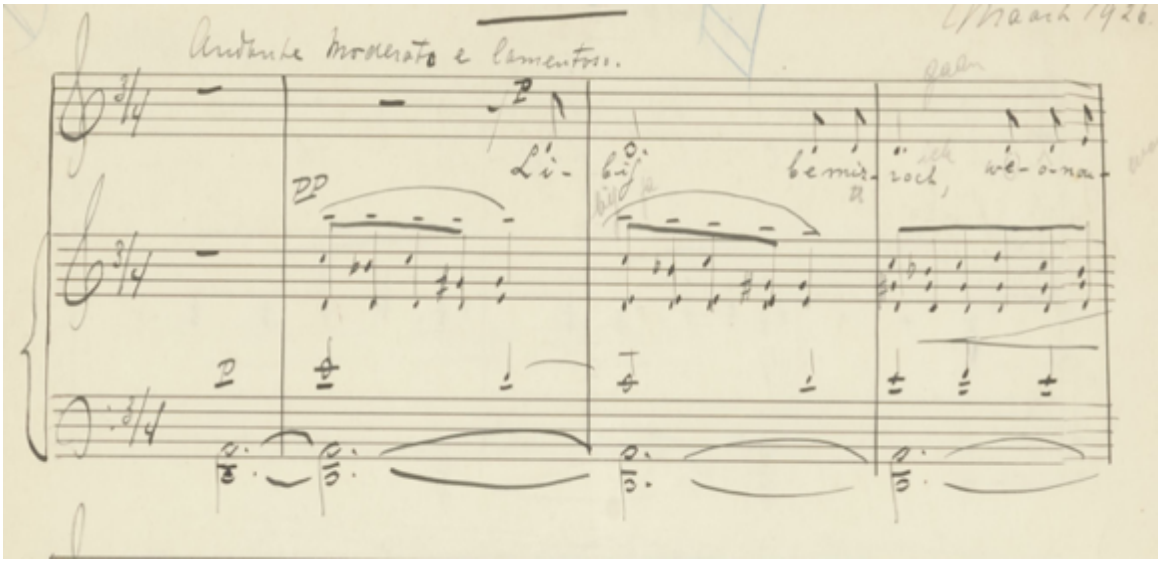


Ex. 21. Example of descending parallel chords in the style of Debussy's songs

In the second of the songs, *My Heart in the East,* the lyrics describe the inner turmoil of a man journeying to Palestine at a time when it was under the rule of the Crusaders, at the same time being very aware of the dangers involved in doing so.

My Heart in the East
But the rest of me far in the West-
How can I savour this life, even taste what I eat?
How, in the bonds of the Moor
Zion chained to the cross,
Can I do what I've vowed to and must?
Gladly I'd leave
All the best of grand Spain for one glimpse of the ruined Shrine's dust.
(Halevi and Halkin, 2011)

As can be seen in Ex. 22, at the beginning of this song, Gokkes employs several musical devices in an attempt to support the mood conveyed by the poem. Gone are the calmer influences of Debussy seen in the first song, and instead we see the introduction of more dissonance, presumably to signify danger. The repeated opening two chords of D7 to E major above a pedal drone, both have the addition of a dissonant note and also have a remote sounding harmonic connection, reinforcing the idea venturing towards somewhere distant. Gokkes also uses an 'exotic', stereotypically 'Eastern' scale with the interval of an augmented second between the third and fourth degrees of the scale. This 'exotic' sounding scale perhaps gives the listener some idea of the eventual destination. The mood of uncertainty at the start of the journey is also reinforced with the use of a pedal drone in the piano left hand which eventually resolves itself in bar 7. At this point there is the reintroduction in bar seven of the recurring appoggiatura theme from the first song, only this time repeated in a descending sequence pattern; presumably to remind us that this person's journey to his beloved Jerusalem is driven by passion.



Ex. 22. The opening four bars of *My Heart in the East*

Composed in 1928, Gokkes's next surviving composition was *Kinah*, a short work scored for two soprano voices, alto, tenor, baritone, and an instrumental ensemble consisting of flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, bassoon, and piano. Again, it is a work inspired by religious text, this time from the *Lamentations of Jeremiah*, one of the five books in the Hebrew Bible that make up the Megillot.

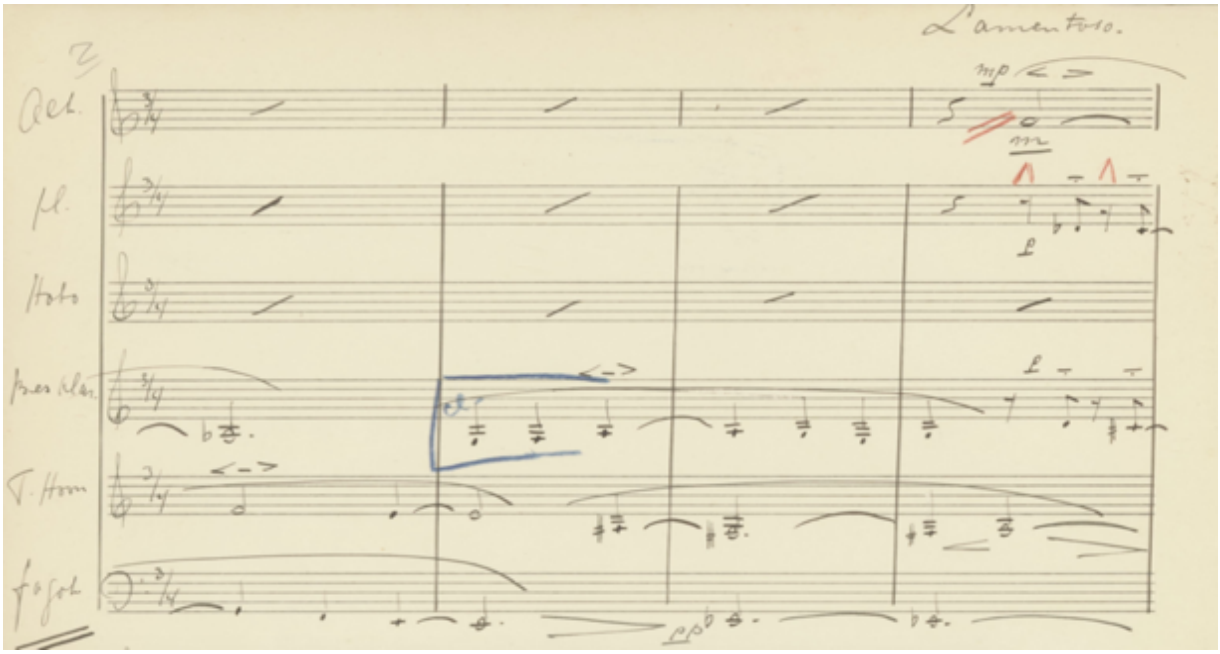
How deserted lies the city,
once so full of people!
How like a widow is she,
who once was great among the nations!
She who was queen among the provinces
has now become a slave.

Lamentations I, verse 1.
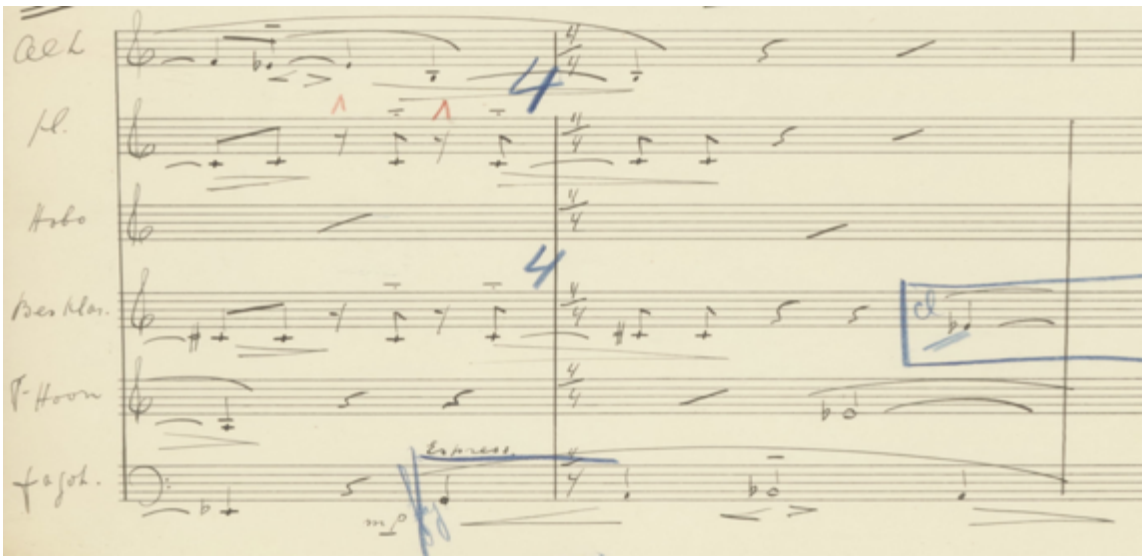
The remaining four books are Songs, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. The Lamentations consists of five chapters which lament the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians during their invasion 586 BC. 'These grief-stricken laments are intermingled with abject confessions of sin and prayers for divine passion' (Britannica, 2020a). The five chapters of Lamentations describe the following events: The sadness of the desolation of Jerusalem after the invasion;

God's anger towards Israel that such a thing should happen; the sharing of the affliction by Jeremiah; a description of the siege; a prayer to God for mercy (Horne et al., 2013: 886-893). As a basis for the programmatic matter used for *Kinah*, Gokkes only refers to the first chapter of Lamentations, more specifically verses one to eight, and we know this as Gokkes attached an autograph copy of the eight verses to his original score.

The instrumentation of the work displays evidence of the influence of Milhaud in that he had previously used a similar combination in his Chamber Symphony No. 6 op. 79 (1922) – except that Milhaud utilised four solo voices, oboe, and cello (Vredenburg, 1 May 1931: 98). The effect is similar in *Kinah* in that Gokkes's choice of instrumental combination helps to create a dark timbre in keeping with the similarly dark subject matter of the lamentations. Bars four to seven of *Kinah* as shown in Ex. 23 demonstrate this: Gokkes uses clarinet, horn, and bassoon in the lower ends of their registers, successfully creating a dark and gloomy atmosphere in the opening bars of the work. Ex.24 illustrates another of Milhaud's stylistic traits in Gokkes's repeated use of implied bitonality with the flute and clarinet playing in parallel semitones (staves two and four), a device which is used throughout the whole of the work.

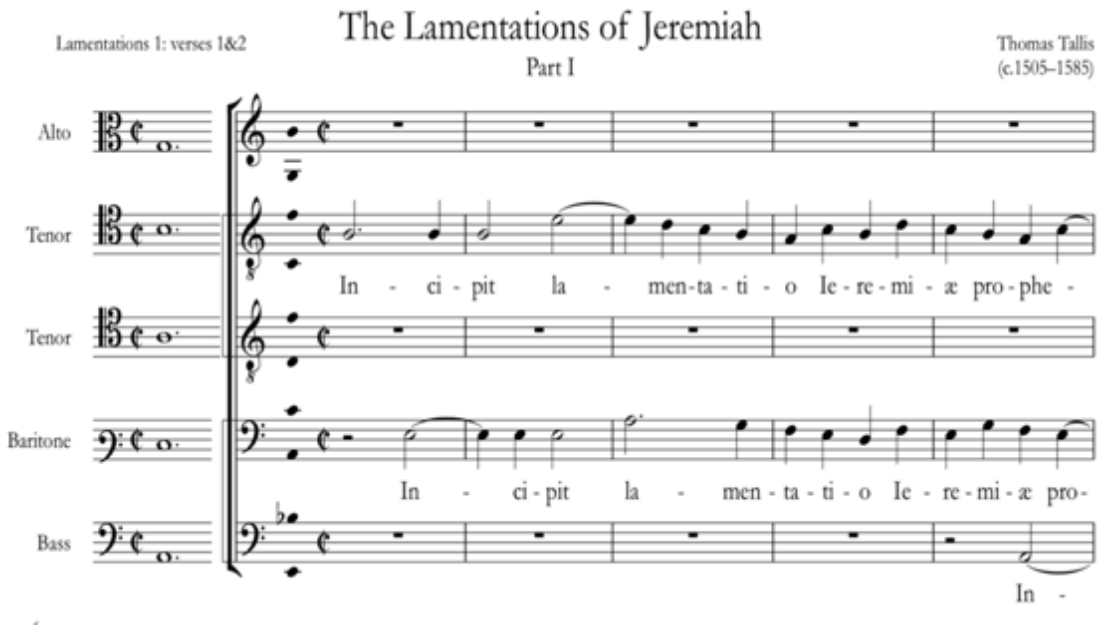


Ex. 23. Bars 4-7 of *Kinah* showing the dark timbres of Gokkes's scoring
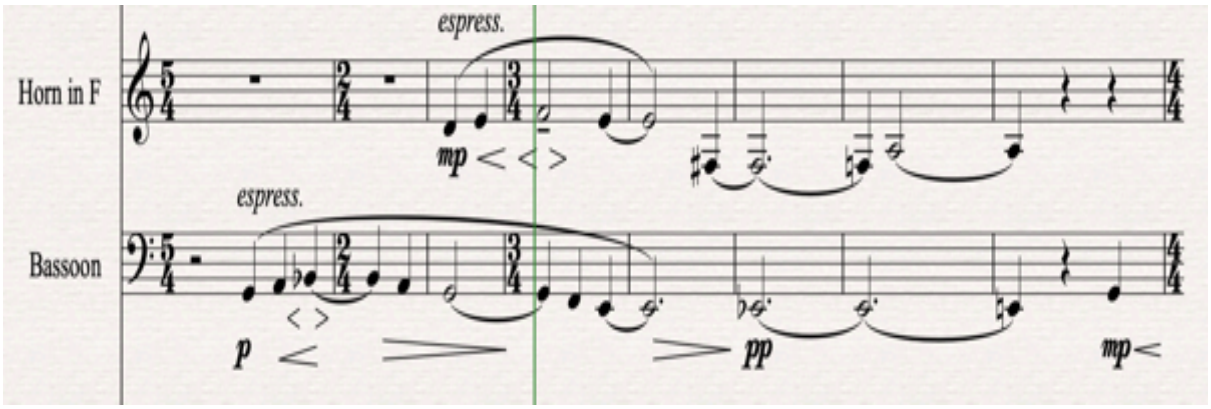


Ex. 24. Gokkes's use of bitonality between the flute and clarinet parts

Texturally, as the above example suggests, *Kinah* also bears a close resemblance to Thomas Tallis's *Lamentations of Jeremiah* which was written in the 1560s. We have already discussed Sem Dresden's attraction to the use of the Renaissance style of contrapuntal and polyphonic writing, and how this, in turn, influenced Gokkes's affinity with the same techniques. Ex. 25 shows the opening of Tallis's *Lamentations*
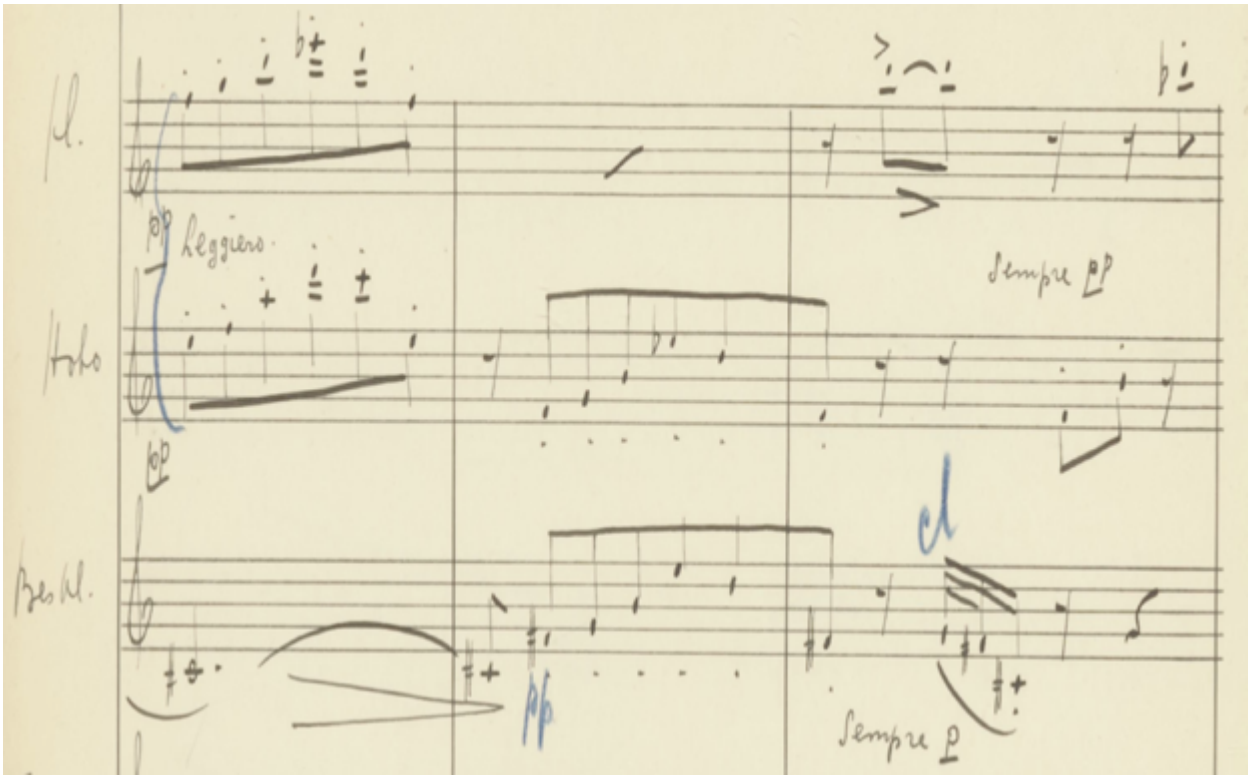


Ex. 25. Opening bars of the *Lamentations of Jeremiah* by Thomas Tallis

of Jeremiah where we can see the use of imitation in the alto and tenor voices. Likewise, in comparison, in Ex. 26 Gokkes utilises the same technique, giving his music an air of solemnity often associated with liturgical music of the Renaissance period.

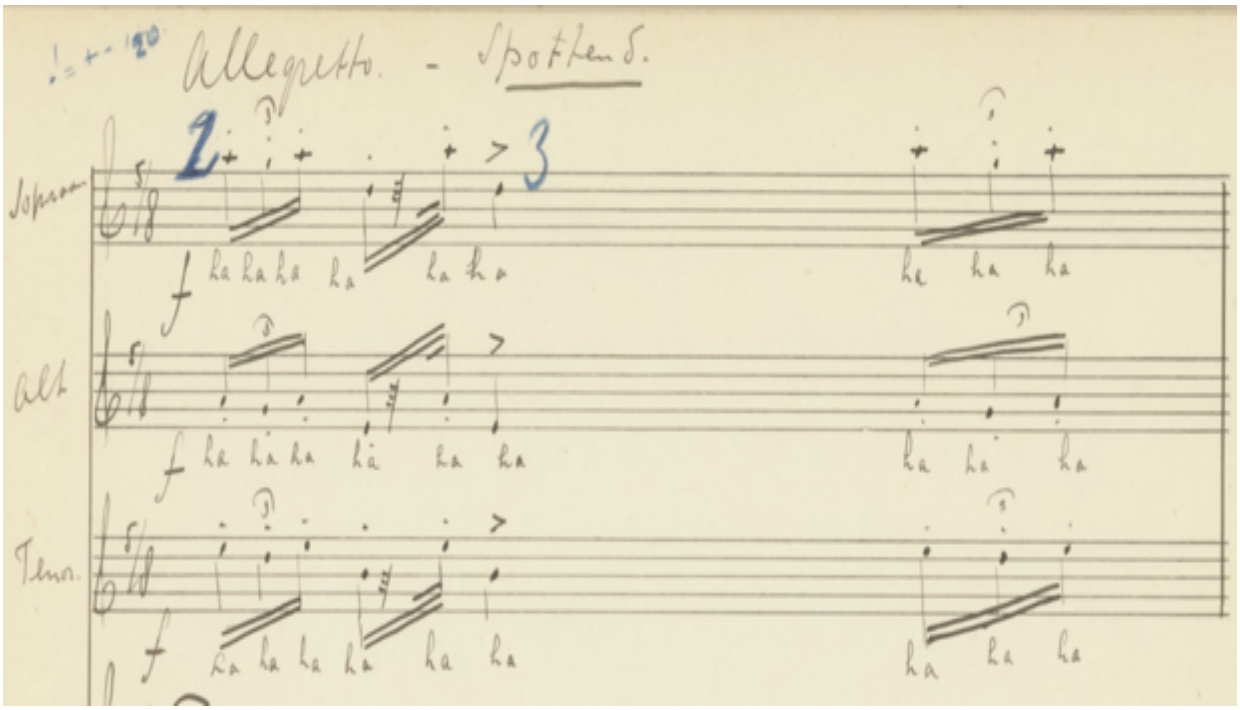


Ex. 26. The opening bars of *Kinah* demonstrating Gokkes's contrapuntal writing. My transcription

Gokkes's use of imitation and polyphonic writing continues to be a feature throughout *Kinah,* but the work does also demonstrate several other interesting influences and innovations. Here, his melodic and harmonic writing is in much more of a modernist style than in his previous work of two years earlier, with melodic fragments that are bordering on atonality, and the extensive use of a localised 'polytonal allusion' throughout. Ex. 27 illustrates an example of the influence of Milhaud on Gokkes's use of this polytonal allusion with the wind instruments placed either a tone or semi-tone apart in the first two bars. We also observe frequent changes of time signature and some very innovative writing in the vocal parts.



Ex. 27. Gokkes's use polytonal allusion in the woodwind parts



Ex. 28. Allegretto section of *Kinah* illustrating the use of the voice in a mocking manner

Ex. 28 (bar 55) has a tempo change to allegretto, and here we can see how Gokkes has used the voice by not using words or lyrics but by setting the syllable ‘ha’ to a specific rhythmic template. What is interesting about this is the fact that Gokkes adds the direction ‘spottend’, which translates from Dutch into ‘mocking’. At this point, the music is conveying a different part of the story where the invaders are possibly mocking their captors with laughter, highlighted very effectively by the use of staccato ‘ha ha ha’ in the voices. This was not a new technique by any means, as musical laughter was a stock figure of nineteenth-century Italian opera – perhaps this is where Gokkes learnt it from – but it is nevertheless interesting to see it used in the context of Gokkes’s work.

Her foes have become her masters;
her enemies are at ease.
The Lord has brought her grief
because of her many sins.
Her children have gone into exile,
captive before the foe.

Lamentations 1, verse 5.
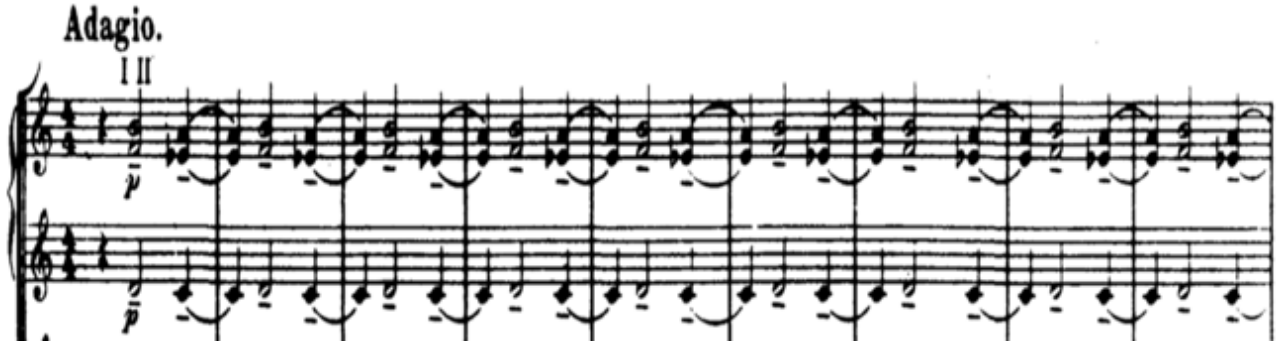
With regards to Gokkes’s surviving works, the stylistic development in *Kinah* is arguably the point where he experimented with more modernistic and stylistically progressive ideas, laying the foundations for the basis of his later compositions.

De Pilgrim voor Jeruzalem, (The Pilgrim of Jerusalem) was another of Gokkes’s surviving works composed in 1928. It is in the form of a German art-song, composed for voice and piano and this time based on a Dutch text written by Jewish poet and author Jacob Israël de Haan (1881-1924). In order to understand Gokkes’s motivation behind writing this work, it would be helpful to look at de Haan’s life and background. De Haan was a Dutch-born Jew raised in a strictly Orthodox family, eventually going on to study law in Amsterdam where he became increasingly involved in Socialism, at the expense of his Jewish faith. He was a complex individual who was largely unsuccessful in his personal relationships,

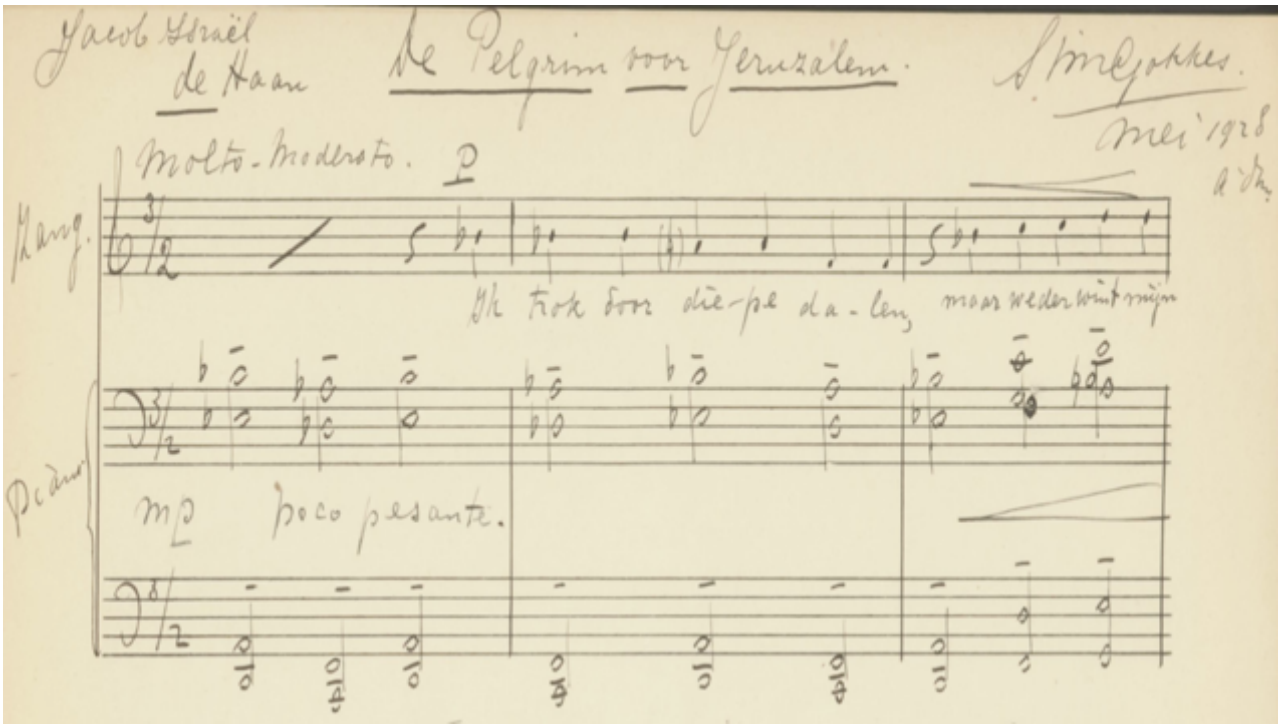
mainly due to his inner struggles with his homosexuality. He eventually found his faith again but found it difficult as 'he was a man who believed in high ethical ideas, but his homosexuality made it impossible for him to achieve the spiritual life he sought' (Soetendorp, 1971: 8). His inner turmoil fuelled him to increasingly reflect upon his Jewishness, the Jewish people, and with his own relationship with God, and it was this that de Haan channelled into his books and poetry.

In 1919 he emigrated to Israel expecting his utopia, only to be hugely disappointed by the physical desolation and filth that he found there as compared to the more comfortable surroundings of Amsterdam. He began teaching law there, and his political zest drove him to join Aguda*, '*an extremist Orthodox anti-Zionist organisation', which in doing so made him highly unpopular with both Arabs and Jews. This may have led to his eventual murder in Jerusalem, 1924, although some argue that it may have been because of his homosexuality (Soetendorp, 1971: 8).

The text for Gokkes's *De Pilgrim voor Jeruzalem* was taken from one of de Haan's poems describing his inner images of travelling 'home' to Jerusalem, and it is likely that the work was Gokkes's tribute to the author. The opening bars of the work itself bear a remarkable similarity to Gustav Holst's *Saturn* from the *Planets* Suite*,* Op. 32 (1914-1916) which was in turn influenced by Arnold Schoenberg's *Five Pieces for Orchestra* (Lambourn, 1987: 422-427). Ex. 29 shows the opening bars of *Saturn* with repeated, alternating intervals of a fourth in the first and second flute parts on the first stave, and if we compare that with Ex.30, the opening bars of the piano part from *De Pelgrim voor Jeruzalem,* we can see a very similar pattern. The main difference is that Gokkes again employs multiple tonalities between the right and left-hand parts, which is reminiscent of Milhaud, Stravinsky, and even displaying some harmonic similarities with Schoenberg's *Five Pieces for Orchestra*. This opening theme in Gokkes's work represents the steady steps that de Haan took on his way to Jerusalem, as with Holst's treatment of the subject which likewise presumably represents the steps that 'old age' took towards death.

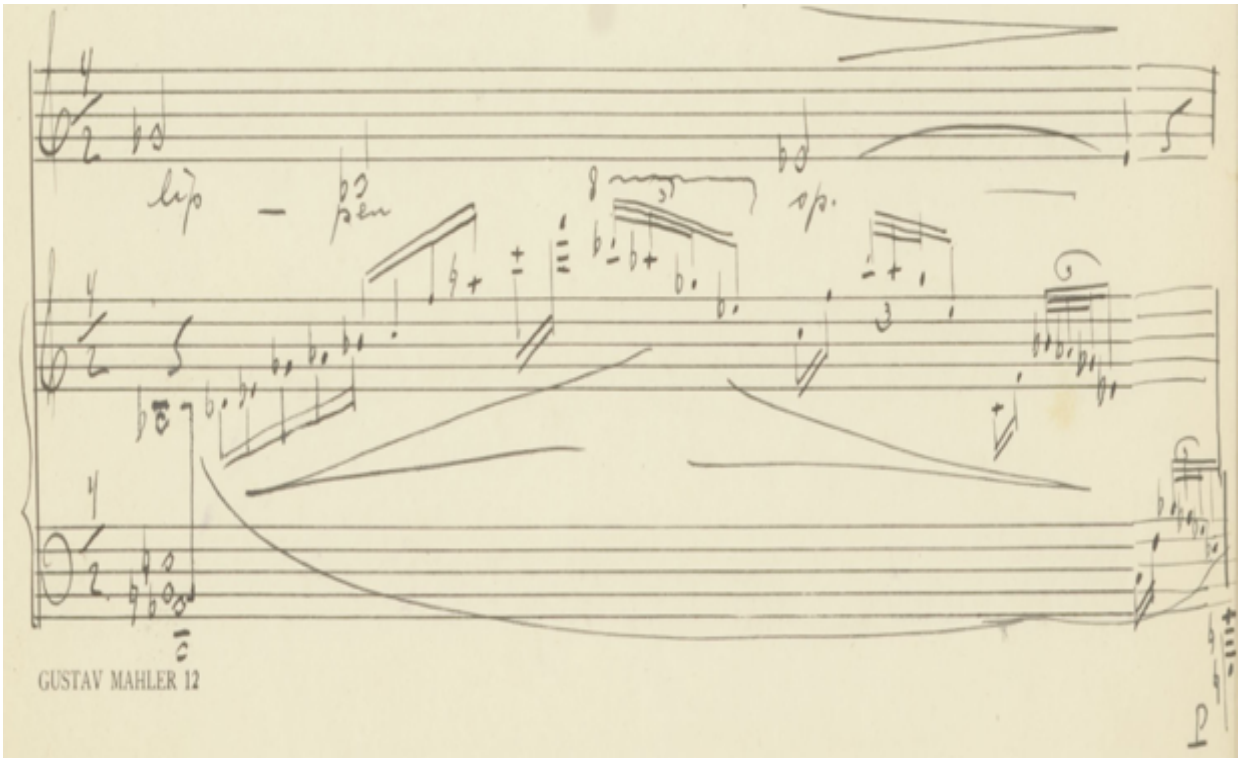


Ex. 29. Opening bars of Holst's *Saturn*



Ex. 30. Opening bars of *De Pelgrim voor Jeruzalem*

In in bar 9 of *De Pelgrim voor Jeruzalem* (Ex. 31) Gokkes introduces a strangely out of place one bar idea which appears and sounds similar to a short jazz break.



Ex. 31. A moment of ‘jazz’
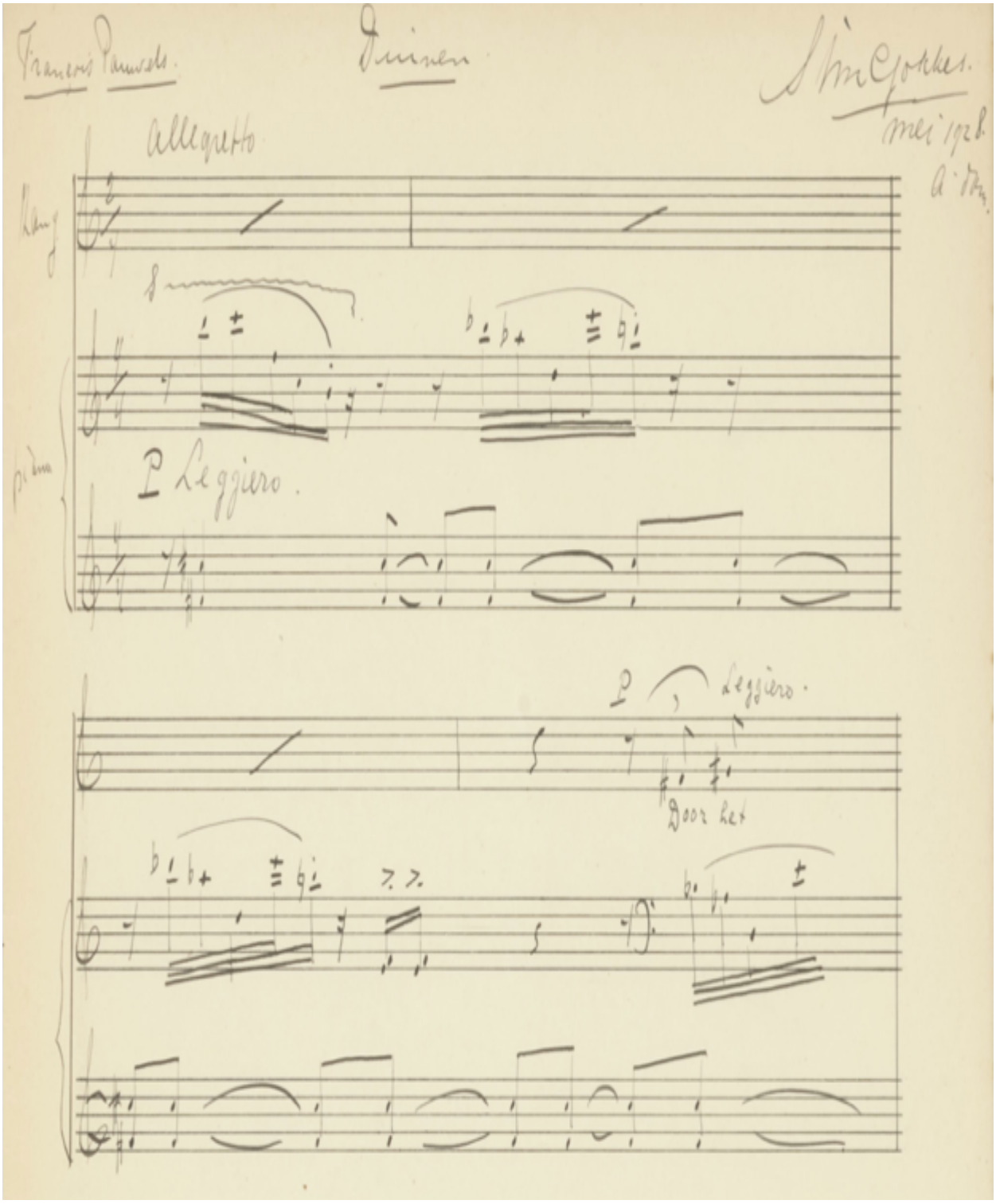
Although the idea plays a short ‘cameo’ role in only two separate bars, it serves to remind us of the influences of Milhaud, Stravinsky, Ravel, and Debussy, all of whom utilised jazz in several of their own works. Its inclusion is open to interpretation, but it could be said to reflect various facets of the text, and de Haan’s personal struggles as captured by it: the musical ‘spirit’ here soars free of its surrounding constraints.

Duiven, another very short song composed by Gokkes in May 1928, was based on lyrics written by François Pauwels (1888-1966), the son of Désiré Pauwels, who Gokkes had earlier worked with at the Pauwels en Kreeft operetta company. Pauwels was a lawyer and writer, writing many books based on his courtroom trials, and also many poems of which *Duiven* was one. The word ‘duiven’ translates as ‘doves’, and the opening lines of the poem, translated from the original Dutch, graphically describes the motions of the bird:
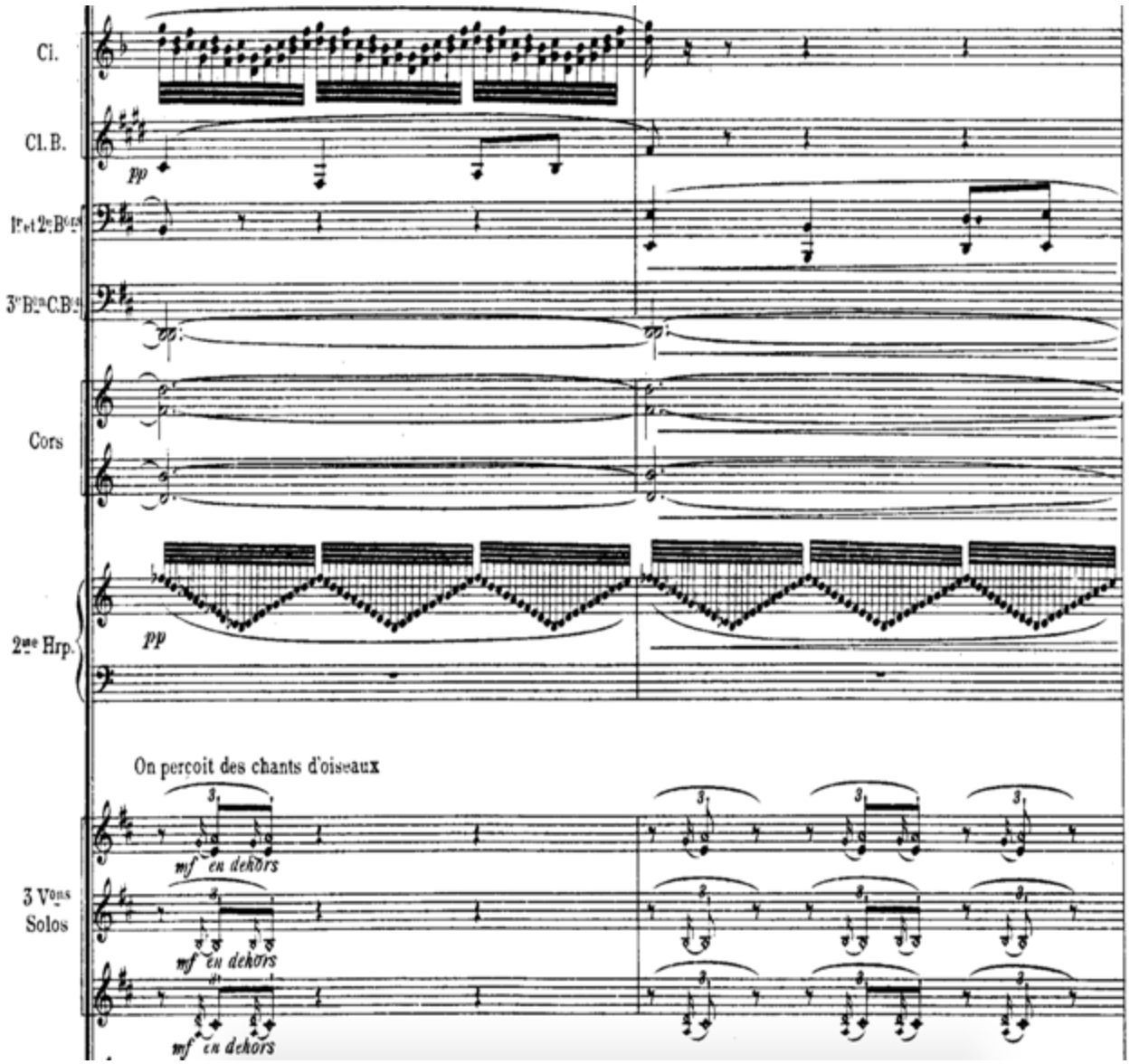
Through the plain blue of the eternal sky,
A flock of doves swings with a swirl,
Sometimes shining like dots,
Sometimes sparkling like shining bluestone.

The composition is programmatic in that it musically describes the flight and quick, random, darting movements associated with birds. The piano accompaniment in Ex. 32 illustrates this with the use of demisemiquavers in a high register giving the impression of the ‘shining’ and ‘sparkling’ referred to in the text, with two accented quavers in the second line presumably imitating a dove’s sudden head movements or its pecking at food. The indiscriminate nature of the rapid note movement is underpinned by Gokkes’s use of a syncopated drone in the piano left hand, giving the work an element of cohesion.

Ravel employed similar techniques at the beginning of the second part of *Daphnis et Chloé* (1913), where he sets the scene of Chloé waking at dawn to the background sounds of a stream and of birds fluttering in the sky, an effect illustrated in Ex. 33, with the effect of the stream and birds vividly achieved with the use of flutes, harp, and three solo violins. In his own attempt to represent nature in his music Gokkes must have been influenced by Ravel, and also Debussy, both of whom held a similar fascination with musical representation of landscape and nature.



Ex. 32. The opening bars of *Duiven* imitating the movements of a bird

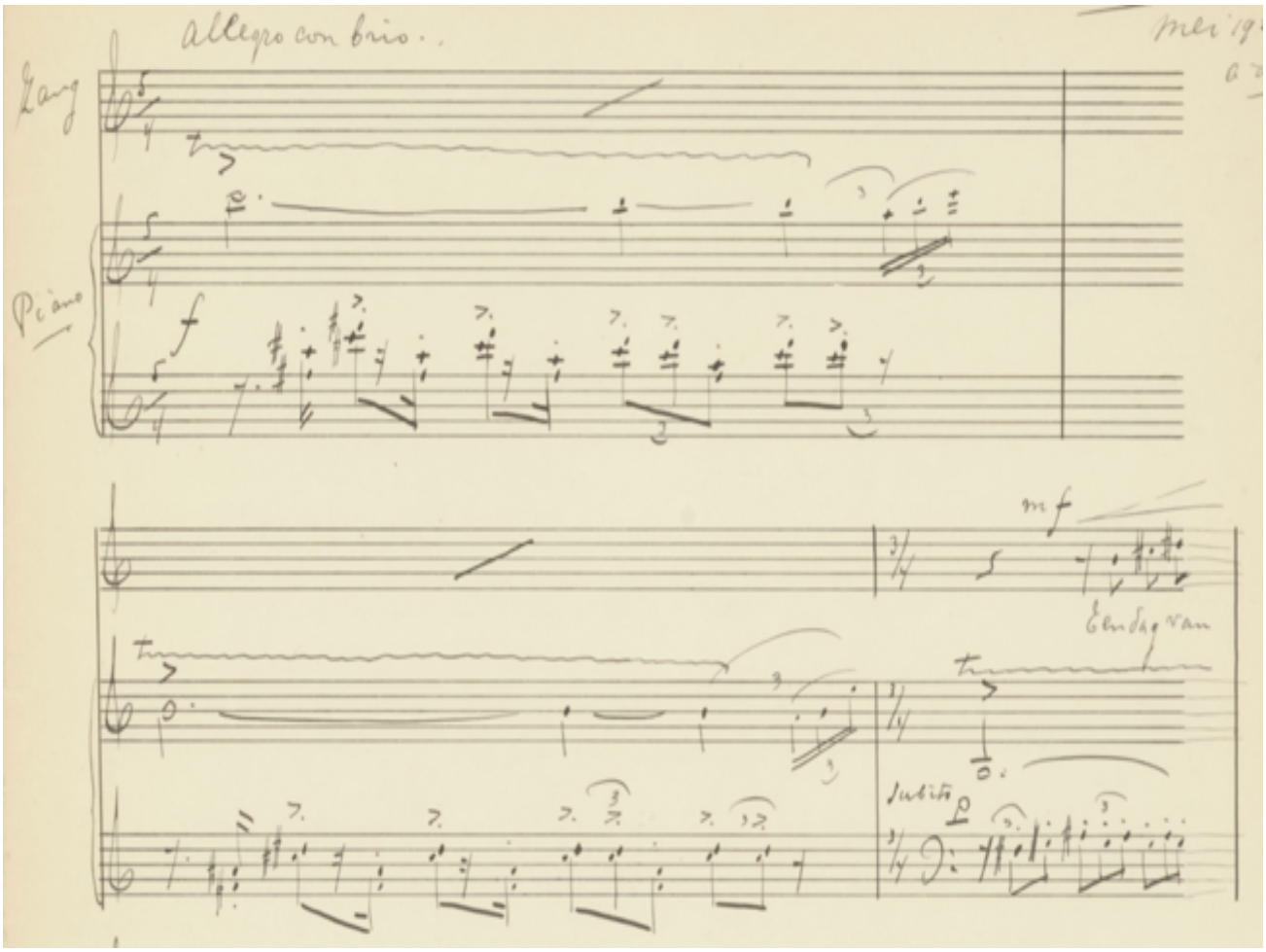


Ex. 33. Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloé* showing the imitation of bird flight and bird song

Another of Gokkes's songs from May 1928 was *Kermesse d'été* (*Summer Fair*), with Dutch text from the poem of the same name by Willem de Mérode. Mérode was a native of the Netherlands and wrote his poems in Dutch, so it is unknown why in this instance he used a French title. However, the phrase *Kermesse d'été* appears to be widely used by the Dutch in much the same way French phrases are currently utilised in English. The opening lines of the poem below are my translation into English:

O soul that is always gasping for salvation,
That you do not rise from your beautiful dungeon,
And flies away from this feast of happy shame.
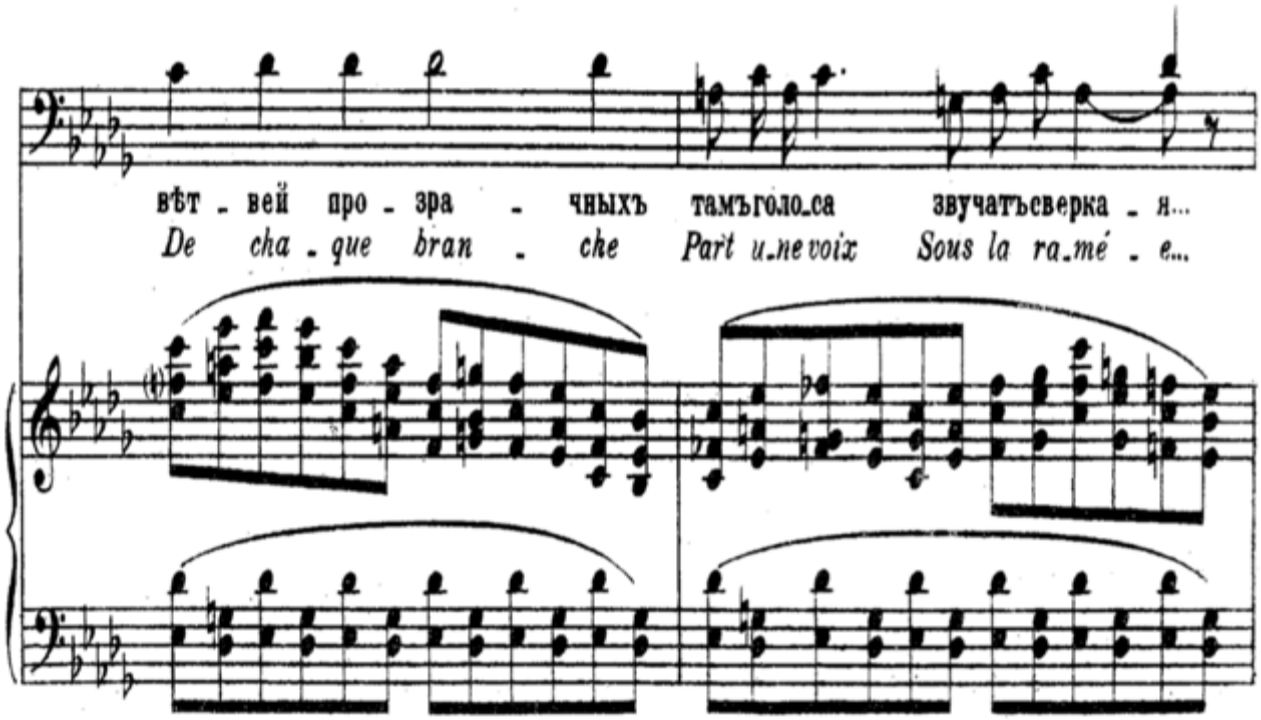
Willem de Mérode (1887-1939) was originally a schoolteacher in the Netherlands and lived with the inner conflict between his devout Roman Catholic religion and his homosexuality. His poetry was seemingly an outlet for his hidden desires, love, and his inner feelings and turmoil. He tried in vain to suppress his homosexuality, but in 1924, he was imprisoned for eight months for having a sexual relationship with an ex-student of sixteen years of age (Venetie, 2018). The above verse from *Kermesse d'été* illustrates Mérode's feelings perfectly. Although the words convey a deep underlying sadness, Gokkes's music is very much the opposite, suggesting almost a celebration of Mérode's homosexuality.



Ex. 34. The opening bars of *Kermesse d'été* depicting the sounds of the summer fair

In Ex. 34 the piano accompaniment in the opening bars of *Kermesse d'été* imitates the sounds of the fair, with rhythm playing an important role. There are repeated dance-like triplet quaver figures, rhythms reminiscent of fanfares, along with the frequent use of time changes. The dance-like triplets presumably represent the music of a carousel, while several bars later we see a fanfare figure reminiscent of a call for attention, perhaps relating to a different attraction at the fair. This strong pictorial element in Gokkes's music is a recurring theme in keeping with the traditions of Debussy and Ravel as discussed in the cultural analysis of *Duiven.* Harmonically, it maintains Gokkes's trait of the use of dissonance and allusions of polytonality, again, the influence of Milhaud and Stravinsky.

A month later, in June 1928, Gokkes completed his last two surviving songs which comprised of *La lune blanche*, and *C'en est fait*. We have already mentioned the influence of Debussy in *La lune blanche* in a comparison with Debussy's *Nocturne No.1* in Ex. 6 and Ex. 7. At this point, it is also worth pointing out the similarity that it also has with Stravinsky's own version of the song from his *Two Poems* by Paul Verlaine Op. 9, composed in 1910. It can be argued that as in Ex. 5, Gokkes's work is texturally similar to some of Debussy's music, but when compared to Stravinsky's song in Ex. 35, we can see that it also has strikingly similar harmonic qualities. In Gokkes's version, the right hand of the piano accompaniment has the same rolling quaver movement, with an emphasis on using intervals of fourths and fifths, and occasionally using sevenths. This has the effect of giving the music a rather bare and mysterious sound, presumably imitating the dark emptiness of the night sky against the stillness of the bright moon. Stravinsky's version also has the same hollow-sounding use of harmony, with the right-hand part utilising intervals of fourths and fifths, and the left hand of the accompaniment also utilising the use of sevenths, although exclusively minor sevenths in this case. The combined effects of these features throughout both pieces result in a remarkable similarity in the quality of sound, style, and atmosphere.
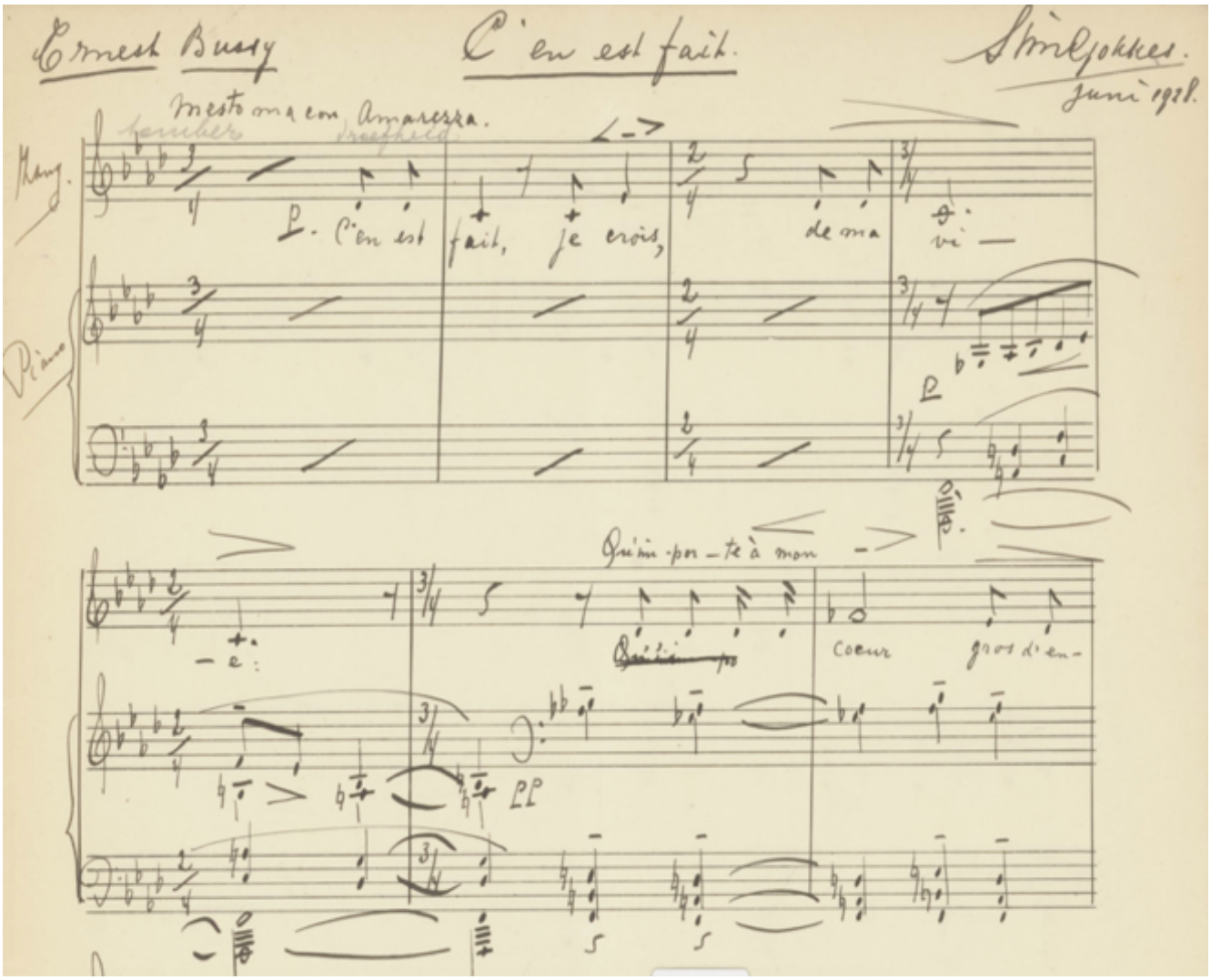


Ex. 35. Bars 6 and 7 of Stravinsky's *La lune blanche* demonstrating the similar harmonic qualities found in Gokkes's version

C'en est fait (*It is Done*) is Gokkes's last surviving song, with a French text from a poem of the same title written by Ernest Bussy (1864-1886) which was taken from the collection *A-Mi-Voix*, published in 1888 (Douglas, 1901: 48). Relatively little is known about Bussy, except that he was born in Lausanne and that he tragically died from tuberculosis at the age of twenty-three. This particular poem was probably written at the same time as his illness, as it seems to express his resignation to his impending death:

I'm done with my life:
What does it matter to my bored heart!
Living no longer makes me want…
Here is the Night, the Night, the Night![30]

[30] My translation.
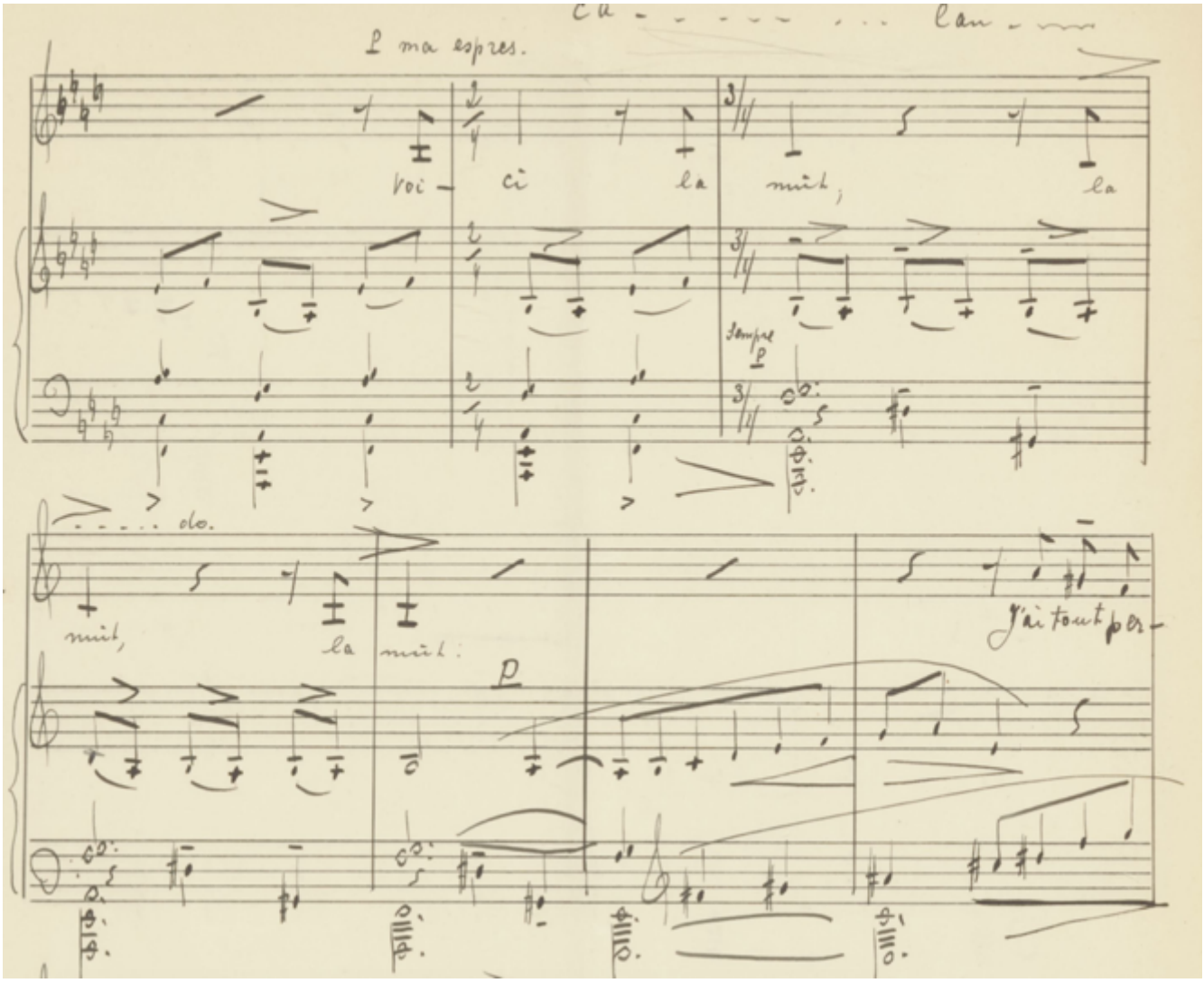
Gokkes's musical treatment of the theme is equally as dark, but again descriptive in its musical content and structure. In this work, Gokkes uses a key signature, something which he seldom used in many of his works. It starts with an implied minor tonality (Ex. 36) which adds to the dark, ethereal quality of the work. The work also has echoes of the chromaticism and atmosphere of Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* Op.4.



Ex. 36. The opening bars of *C'en est fait* displaying F minor tonality

The vocal line in Ex. 37 appears to require the use of spoken voice, although Gokkes does not provide any instructions as to how this should be performed. Arguably an innovative addition to Gokkes's vocal oeuvre, the use of the spoken voice was by no

means a new phenomenon, with a similar technique having been used by Engelbert Humperdinck in his melodrama *Königskinderin* of 1897. Schoenberg also used a similar technique in *Pierrot Lunaire* known as *Sprechstimme,* an Expressionist technique which simply means 'speaking voice'. Both of these works differ from *C'en est fait* however in that their implied spoken pitches are far more differentiated and even have accidentals. In comparison, Gokkes's implied spoken pitches in Ex. 37 have a far narrower range, but he is however very precise in the requirements of rhythm and expression. Also, worth noting is that in the third bar of the left-hand part of the piano accompaniment (which features throughout), Gokkes, as he often does in his music, incorporates a descriptive element and cleverly deploys a musical



Ex. 37. Gokkes's use of spoken voice in *C'en est fait*

device that gives the impression of a clock ticking, and life slipping away as the music fades to nothing.

Sjire Kodesh was Gokkes's penultimate work, which was published in 1937, and consists of three sections: music for the Friday night service; the Sabbath morning service; and a selection of choral works. The Friday night service music is a series of nine cantorial solos, and the Sabbath music consists of twenty-eight pieces made up of a variety of cantorial solos, cantorial solos with community singing, and cantorial solos with choral accompaniment. The last section containing purely choral works has a dedication at the start which reads 'uit groote erkentelijkheid opgedragen aan het Bestuur van het Kerkelijk Zangoor *Lechowod Oelesiferes*' (Dedicated to the Board of the Ecclesiastical Choir *Lechowod Oelesiferes*) (Gokkes, 1937: 63) which we can assume was referring to the resident choir of the Great Synagogue in Amsterdam where Gokkes was musical director. These choral inclusions are a combination of pieces for male choir with cantorial solos, mixed choir and cantorial solos, and mixed choir, organ, and cantorial solos. I have already conducted a brief analysis of fragments of *Sjire Kodesh* (examples 4 and 5) earlier in this thesis, and it has provided us with the idea of this work representing a microcosm of Gokkes's development as a composer.

Most of the inclusions in *Sjire Kodesh,* however, were in fact composed between 1934 and 1936, and we know this because each work is accurately dated. Gokkes must have composed at a prolific rate, as sometimes he wrote up to five pieces on the same day as was the case with *En Kelohenoe, Adonoj oz Leammo, Olenoe, Wenemaar*, and *Bajjom Hahoe* which were all written on 14 November 1934. The only choral works which were not composed in the 1930s were *Lecha Dodi*, written January 1923, and *Adon Alom*, written in 1927. As already mentioned, *Lecha Dodi* is an odd inclusion into this body of work which was meant to look back to discarded traditional synagogue music techniques, as it displays traits of the reformation in a style reminiscent of Sulzer and Schlesinger. But, by 1927 Gokkes was already beginning to introduce more modernistic idioms into his choral compositions which is evident in *Adon Alom*.

Gokkes was more stylistically consistent with the melodies in his cantorial solo inclusions in that he continually harks back to the traditional techniques of synagogue music, with its use of ancient modes and motifs. With regards to metre, he was not so consistent in that most of the solos are free of time signatures and bar lines, giving the music a free improvisatory feel. Some, however, such as *Lech Adonoj* are not so, as they are strictly metered and measured (Gokkes, 1937: 21). Nonetheless, for anyone unfamiliar with the music of Sim Gokkes, *Sjire Kodesh* presents the full spectrum of his compositional palate.

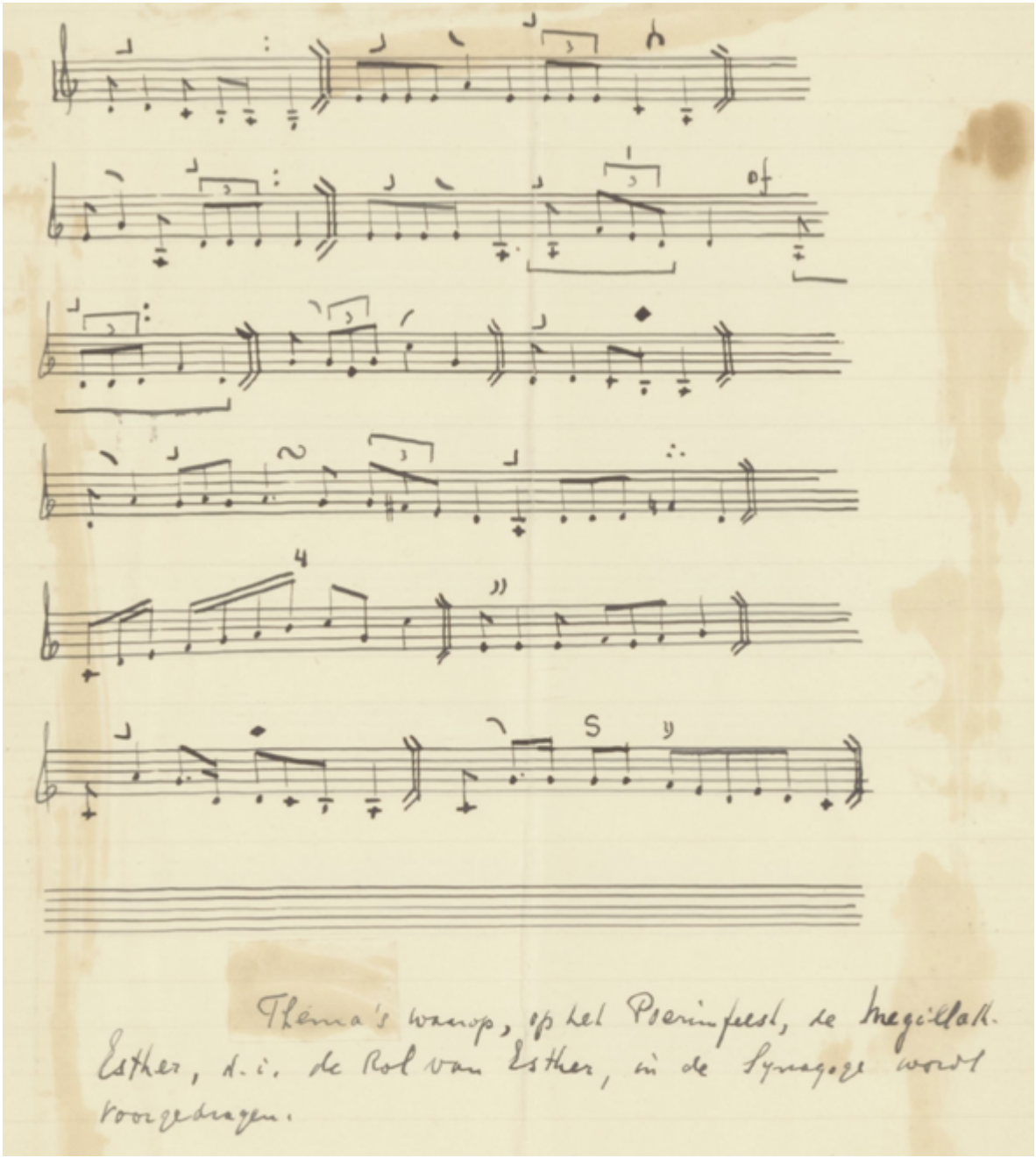
If we look at the dates of Gokkes's extant compositions that we know of, it becomes evident that his main focus in the mid-1930s was composing music for the synagogue. Along with presenting lectures about his opinions regarding the direction that synagogue music was heading in, he must have given this mode of composition his full attention for some time. Most of his secular works appear to have been composed either side of this period, with most of his surviving works having been composed in the 1920s and late 1930s.

One work composed in the late 1930s was Gokkes's last surviving work, the *Sonatine for Piano* written in 1939, which has a dedication to Dutch pianist and composer Willem Andriessen (1887-1964) written on the original manuscript. From this, we can assume that Andriessen performed the work at some point. The work is one of many of Gokkes's that contained references to the Hebrew Bible and is based on the story of Esther told during Purim. We saw a synopsis of the story earlier in this thesis, when discussing Gokkes's orchestral work *Shéhérazade*, and to briefly recapitulate, it is a story of God saving the Jews and 'is a deliverance from the dagger of the assassin and the hangman's rope' (Pryde, 1891: 264), the result of Queen Esther warning her husband, the Persian King Ahasuerus of the planned massacre.

Attached to Gokkes's original manuscript is a sheet in Gokkes's handwriting displaying traditional musical motifs associated with the Mode of Esther,[31] with the different motifs segregated by bar lines. The Book of Esther had its own mode, but

[31] The mode of Esther is associated with the celebration of *Purim* in the synagogue.

we should first make it clear that although a scale and a mode could look identical in appearance, Cohon describes the difference as follows: ‘In synagogue music
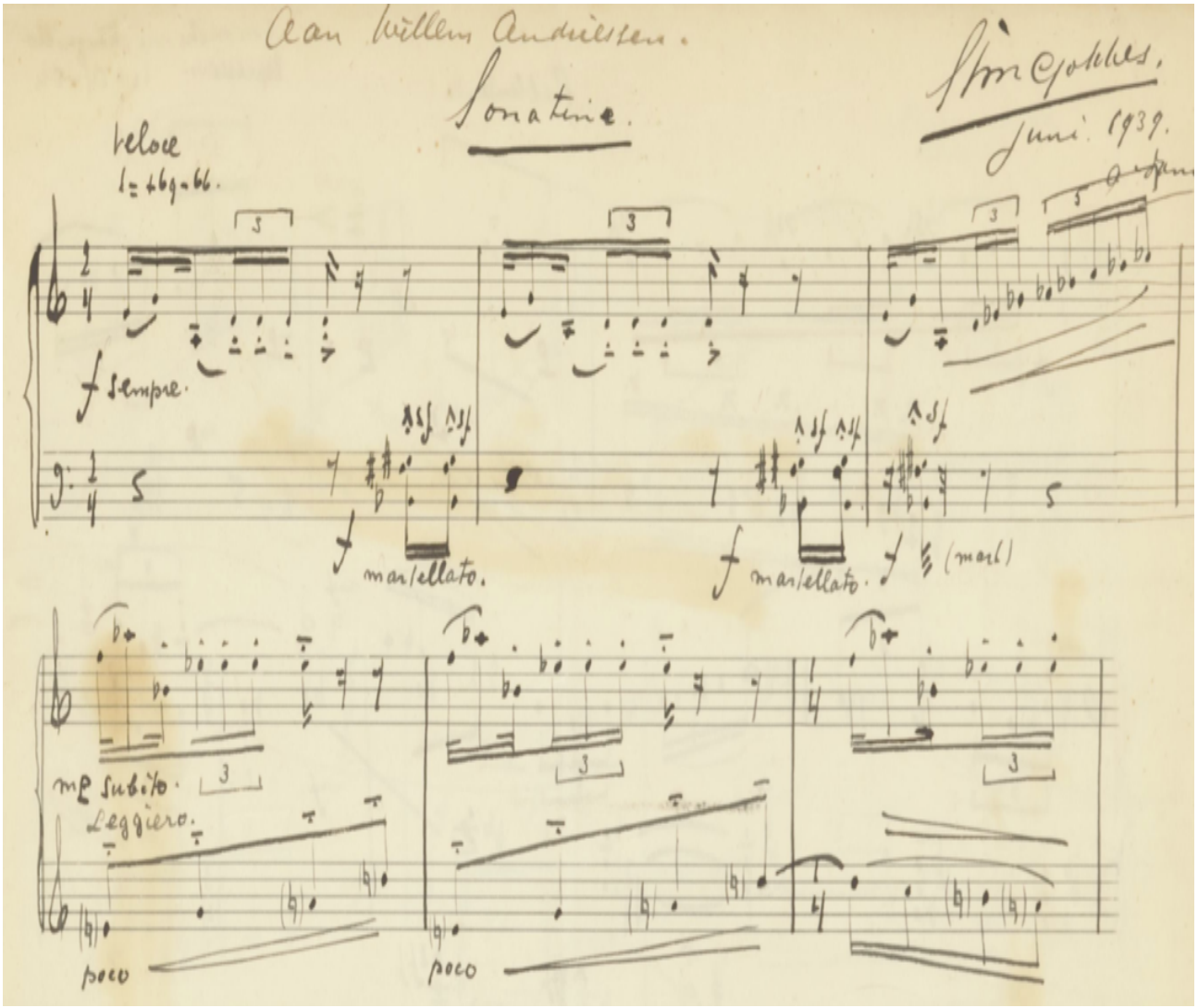


Ex. 38. Esther’s motifs as used during *Purin* of which there are eleven in total

then, while a scale is merely a succession of intervals, a mode, or Steiger, consists of a combination of traditional phrases within a given scale’ (Cohon, 1950: 17-32). Originally the Mode of Esther was ‘really only a speaking tone with some elevated
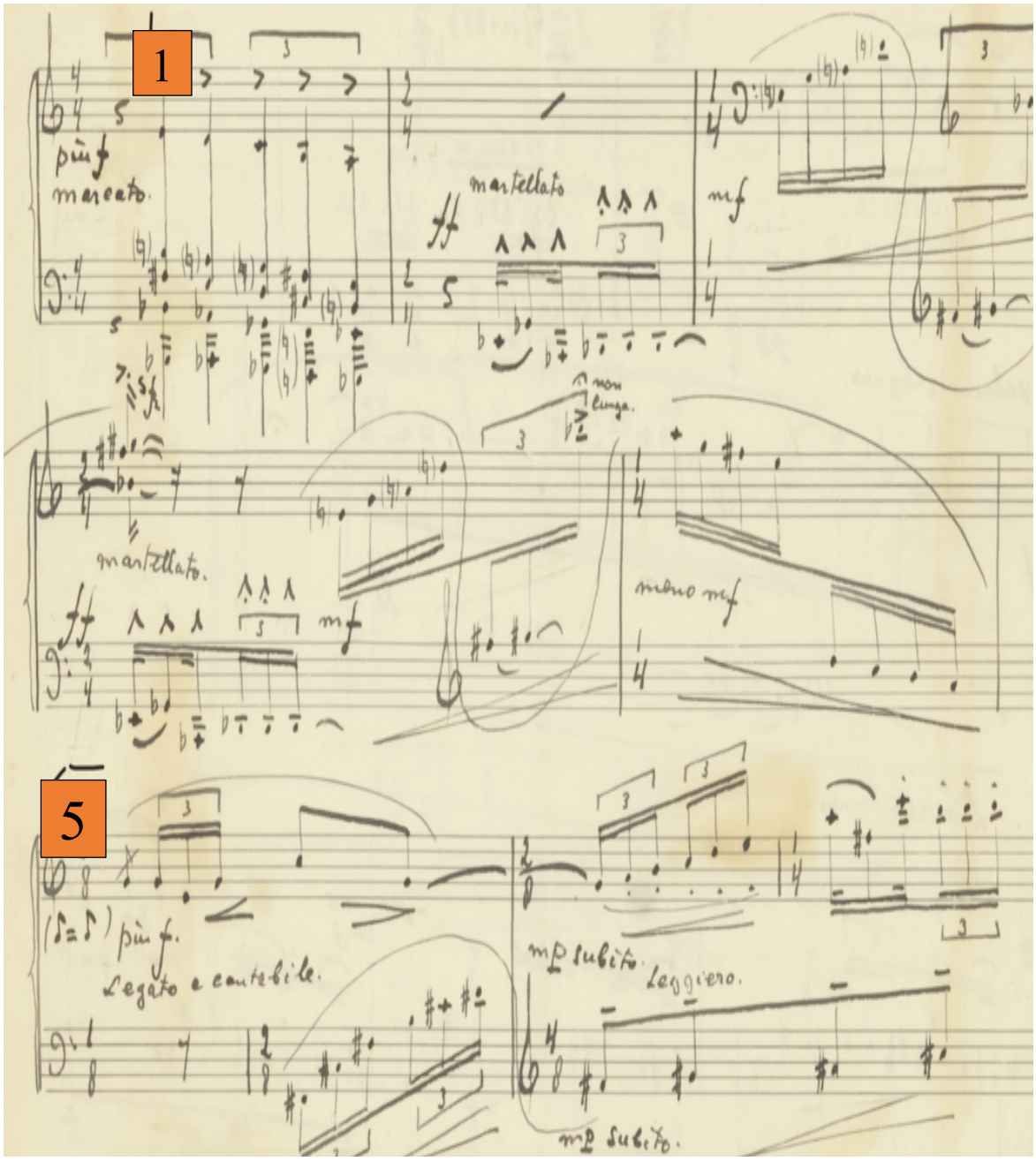
points, especially at the half and full stops' (Idelsohn, 1992: 65). However, there have been regional variations, and the Mode of Esther as used by Gokkes's Ashkenazi community traditionally used a combination of two different modes – Dorian and Phrygian, as well as introducing motifs from other different modes such as Pentateuch and Lamentations. (Idelsohn, 1992: 65). Ex. 38 shows the various motifs from the Mode of Esther used by Gokkes.

The *Sonatine* is a fragmented collage of the motifs from Ex. 38, some of which are clearly identifiable at the beginning of the piece in Ex. 39.
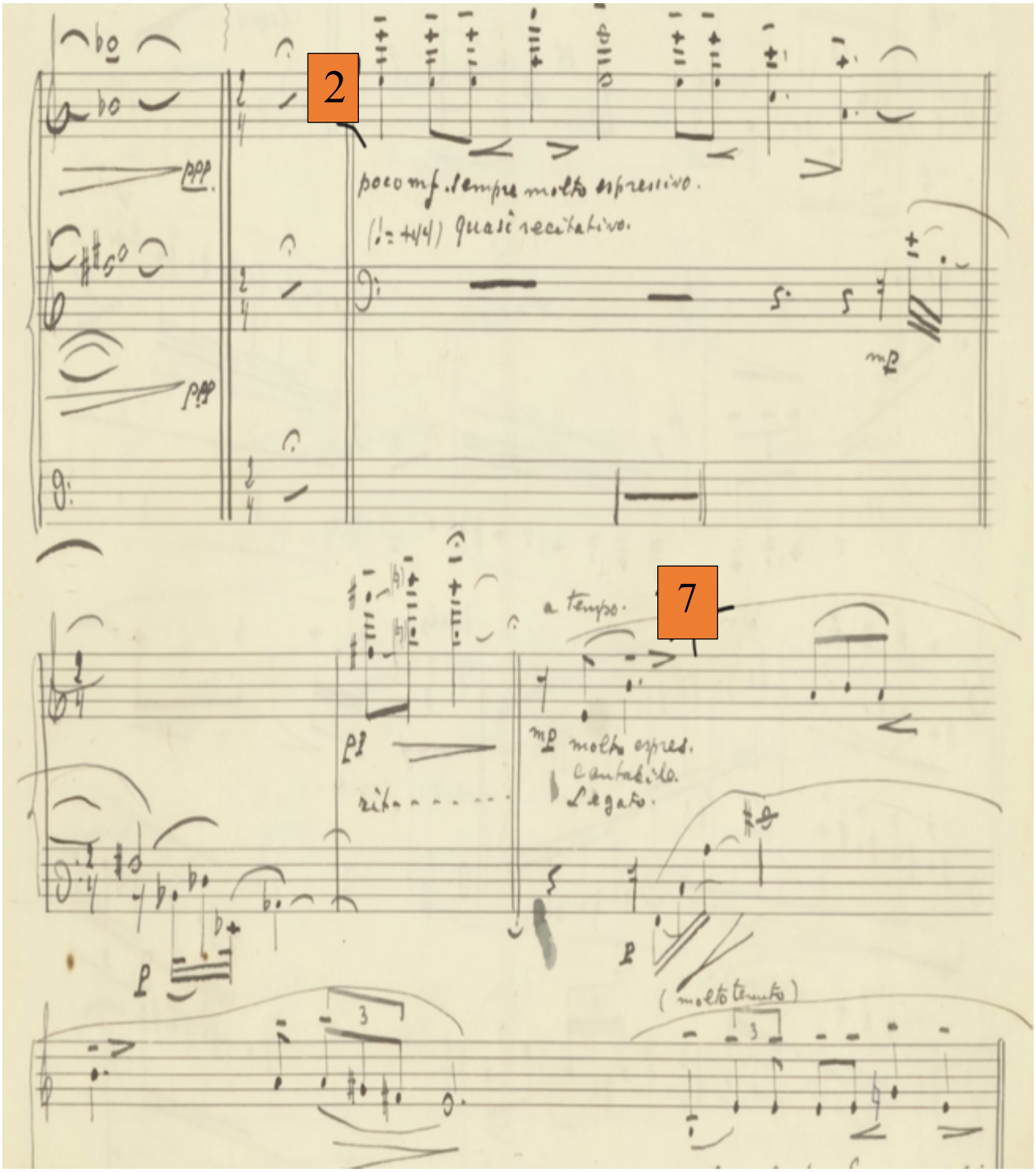


Ex. 39. The opening motif used in the Sonatine

For reasons of space, I do not intend to do a full analysis here, but if we compare Ex. 39 with Ex. 38 it is clear that at the start of the Sonatine, Gokkes uses the third motif from Ex. 38, with exactly the same pitches, but with the note values halved. This is then repeated at several different pitches while being punctuated by pairs of discordant semiquavers. In fact, that theme is used extensively in the form of different variations throughout the whole work.



Ex. 40. The introduction of themes one and five

Ex. 40 sees the introduction of two more of the Esther motifs: motif number one in the first bar albeit rhythmically different, and then motif number five at the start of the last line, with the note values half the length of the original version.



Ex. 41. A quasi-religious section utilising motifs number two and seven

Ex. 41 sees a complete change in mood with Gokkes moving away from the rhythmically aggressive and quick moving opening section, into a calmer ‘quasi-religious’ section reminiscent of synagogue chant. Here, he introduces motifs two and seven in a style that would sound similar to a cantorial chant in its pure form, albeit with a piano and not voice.

The work continues in this vein, and it is a statement of Gokkes’s preference for incorporating biblical themes into his music and establishing him as arguably the ‘most Jewish among the [Dutch] “Jewish composers” at that time’ (Scholten, 2015: 99). The story of Esther used as the basis for this last surviving work also has a certain irony, as according to musicologist Diet Scholten ‘2,500 years later, nobody could prevent a similar plan to systematically murder all European Jews’ (Scholten, 2015: 99).

Conclusion.

'The future influences the present just as much as the past.'

Friedrich Nietzche

To conclude, we should begin by recapitulating the main purposes of this research project. First, it was to investigate Sim Gokkes's personal life, circumstances, and musical background, and how this, in turn, influenced his compositional style and output during his musical career. The second objective was to illustrate that, at the heart of Gokkes's broad oeuvre, his synagogue works can be considered particularly innovative in that they successfully combined both traditional Jewish techniques with those that were generally considered more modernistic, in a Western European artistic sense, at that time.

Although research into German political motivations behind the *Reichsmusikkammer* and the concepts of *Entartete Kunst* and *Entartete Musik* in Germany is already well advanced, it was felt important to present this information in the exposition of the present thesis as a backdrop to the wider political events that would later affect musical life in the Netherlands during the German occupation of 1940. Ultimately, one effect of German musical and cultural policy in Germany's occupied territories was to cut short the careers and sometimes the lives of many Dutch-Jewish composers who at that time were beginning to contribute towards putting the Netherlands firmly back on the European musical map. One particular composer who met his death was Sim Gokkes, a man who was truly innovative in his field, and as we have seen, was a composer who may very well have gone on to be a major musical influence in the post-war Netherlands. We can only speculate as to what may have been with regards to the influence that Gokkes may have had on Dutch music after 1945, and what pathway music would have taken had he and other significant Dutch composers survived World War II. Gokkes was visionary with his preference for modernism as compared with most other composers in the Netherlands before the Occupation, but a small number of Dutch composers including Willem Pijper, who, although he died in 1947, was able to pass on this

legacy of modernism to his many students who then took it forward into a new era, making pre-war music look archaic.

Most Dutch-Jewish composers perished during the Holocaust, and the small number who survived the war seemingly did not share Gokkes's enthusiasm for developing the Jewish nationalistic element in their music. This may have been borne out of political expediency due to the fact that 'the returning Jews were less than welcome in many places in the Netherlands, that Jews had been discriminated against in post-war restitution cases, and that there were expressions of antisemitism both by the Dutch government and in Dutch society' (Gerstenfeld, 1999). It may on the other hand have been because they were not wedded to their Jewish heritage in the same manner that Gokkes had been. However, Max Vredenburg continued to pursue his interest in Zionism and maintained his passion for composing music based on Jewish and Biblical themes.

It is evident that the influence of Gokkes's music teachers played a very important role from his early years onwards, and that his musical interests and influences followed two important main trajectories which were both secular and liturgical in nature. These two trajectories would ultimately meet later in his career, combining his passion for secular and synagogue music, and resulting in his innovative and seminal collection of songs for synagogue titled *Sjire Kodesh*. From the analysis conducted earlier in this thesis, we can see that this is a work that perfectly illustrates the argument that Gokkes's music was a juxtaposition of modern western art music alongside ancient and traditional Jewish techniques.

It was therefore important to look at how each of his teachers influenced each of Gokkes's musical trajectories, with Ben Geysel providing a focus on secular choral and operatic music along with the promotion of youth involvement, and Victor Schlesinger providing the focus on liturgical music in the synagogue. Sem Dresden's teaching set Gokkes on the path to composing where the secular and sacred would eventually meet in the form of his unique compositional style.

Gokkes was above all a musical innovator in that as a conductor he promoted secular youth choirs, he rescued long-neglected operas from oblivion and brought them back into the public arena, and he successfully reintroduced Jewish nationalism and a 'Jewish sound' into choral music with the formation of the first Jewish oratory organisation in the Netherlands in the form of the Jewish Oratory Association of Nathaniel. He was also a very knowledgeable and strongly opinionated man, with a deep understanding of the work of Jewish ethnologist and musicologist Abraham Idelsohn, an awareness of developments in the field of the development of Jewish music, and an appreciation of compositional styles in Europe at that time. This willingness to learn from others enabled him to become that great innovator.

Having conducted a cultural analysis of Gokkes's compositions, we should also now attempt to justify Scholten's earlier statement that Gokkes was arguably the 'most Jewish among the [Dutch] "Jewish composers" at that time'. To reinforce any such judgement would, of course, require more extensive research into the compositional context that surrounds Gokkes, and a deeper exposition of issues of Jewish identity in music, and this will be pursued by the present author in future study. Even so, the survey in this chapter has made it clear that for a large proportion of his surviving works, 'Jewishness' in his music is a subsidiary issue: western European modernism, particularly that stemming from France, is at least as strong, if not a stronger presence.

Nonetheless, numerous works do very strongly support claims for Gokkes's devotion to Jewish authenticity in music. *Sjire Kodesh*, Gokkes's collection of synagogue music, is really a timeline illustrating Gokkes's development with regards to his desire for the old to inform the new: ancient, traditional synagogue techniques and music being complimented by twentieth-century contemporary ideas, as in the song *Tsaddik Kattomor* (Ex.5). The early works of *Sjire Kodesh* demonstrate a clear connection with the reformists such as Sulzer, and ultimately Gokkes's teacher Schlesinger. The later works, as is the case in Sonatine as well as *Sjire Kodesh*, hark back to the past, resurrecting neglected modes and motifs, but complementing them with Gokkes's own modern stylistic stamp.

For Gokkes and other Dutch-Jewish composers, the political manoeuvrings mentioned in the exposition of this research, along with future events in the Netherlands after the 1940 occupation would ultimately prove to be devastating from both a musical and personal perspective.

Much of this research is completely original, particularly with regards to Gokkes's personal life and his experiences at the hands of the Nazis. The third section is particularly important, as this contains the cultural analysis of his existing compositions most of which have not seen the light of day for over eighty years. Part of the research process has also involved realisation and private performance of a selection of these works, again providing an opportunity to hear something that is quite unique; I hope to undertake further, public performances of his music in the near future. This work, combined with more extensive research in Dutch newspaper archives, will also hopefully enable future researchers to be able to obtain a more accurate picture of what Gokkes's lost works may have looked like and sounded like. For the first time, we can now clearly see the influences of other composers in his music, and also how his frequent references to the Bible have manifested themselves. His developmental pathway is now there for all to see, and also hear for the first time in eighty-one years.

Given the constraints of this thesis there are several other avenues of investigation that merit further research, and that should be mentioned in conclusion. Much of this current thesis devotes time to investigating the concept of Gokkes's Dutch-Jewish identity and how this manifested itself in many of his compositions, both secular and non-secular. Comparisons have been made with Jewish composers of other nationalities such as Bloch and Milhaud, and how they in turn had an element of influence on Gokkes, but it would be interesting to compare Gokkes's own expression of Jewish identity with that of other Dutch-Jewish composers of his time. Most, it would seem, were indifferent about their Jewish backgrounds, but some were influenced by it to different degrees. For example, Leo Smit (1900-1943) was not particularly concerned about Judaism (Vis, 2015: 218), but he did teach composition at a newly established school for cantors in the synagogue, as well as having arranged various Hebrew melodies. Mischa Hillesum (1920-1943) again remained largely unconcerned about his Jewish heritage (Regenhardt, 2015: 125)

until later in life when he began to compose Jewish music, the pieces often disguised with non-Jewish titles as not to attract unwanted attention. Many of his works used a Klezmer ensemble as part of their instrumentation and were apparently popular at weddings (Regenhardt, 2015: 126). Dick Kattenburg (1919-1944) was immersed in Jewish culture and wrote and arranged many Hebrew melodies. A Dutch composer whose Jewish identity was very important to him was Max Vredenburg (1904-1976). He was a Zionist from an early age, and his passion for Judaism was evident in both his politics and his music. In 1930 he conducted the Jewish Men's Choral Society Harpe Davids, an ensemble that Gokkes had also conducted, and Vredenburg's love of Jewish music is evident in his own compositional style which was very often written in a Jewish idiom. Also, like Gokkes, he gave many lectures and wrote several articles on Jewish music.

The attempted politicisation of music in the Netherlands under German occupation is another area in need of further, more detailed research, with the formation of the Nederlandsche Kultuurkamer, the subsequent implications of the exclusion of Jewish musicians from Dutch cultural life, and how this compared with events in Germany. The non-Jewish composers who consequently offered resistance to these political changes in the form of refusing to sign an Aryan declaration to obtain membership to the Kultuurkamer, or sheltering Jewish fugitives, also merit further attention. They include Jan van Gilse (1881-1944), Johanna Bordewijk-Roepman (1892-1971), and Marius Flothuis (1914-2001). It should also be pointed out that several of the Jewish composers listed in the next paragraph were also engaged in acts of cultural resistance which resulted in punishment at the hands of the Nazi regime.

Sim Gokkes was just one of many other Dutch-Jewish and non-Jewish composers who suffered persecution during the German occupation, and it is important that more is known about these individuals. The appendix at the end of this thesis lists some of these composers and offers a short insight into their lives and musical contributions to Dutch music before and during this period. Some were persecuted or murdered because they were Jewish, while others were similarly treated simply because they refused to conform to Nazi cultural policy. As part of my future research I intend to not only provide more detailed and comprehensive biographies of the Jewish composers listed in the appendix, but also the Jewish composers who

managed to survive World War II and who were fortunate enough to continue their musical careers to some acclaim. This latter includes Henriëtte Bosmans (1895-1952), Lex van Delden (1919-1988), Sem Dresden (1881-1957), Julius Hijman (1901-1969), Carel Jacobs (1909-1980), Leo Kok (1893-1992), Hans Krieg (1899-1961), Hans Lachman (1906-1990), Bertus van Lier (1906-1972), Reine Colaço Osorio-Swaab (1881-1971), Wilhelm Retich (1892-1988), Max Vredenburg (1904-1976), and Rosy Wertheim (1888-1949).

Through this whole process, I hope that I have been able to present a cohesive and comprehensive insight into Sim Gokkes, the man, his music, and his ultimate fate, providing a platform for further research in this area, particularly in the English language.

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APPENDIX: A Tribute to the Jewish Composers Who Perished in the Nazi Death Camps

At this point, I feel it is fitting to provide a small tribute to all of the other Dutch-Jewish composers who senselessly lost their lives for no other reason than bigotry, at the same time destroying an entire generation of immense Dutch talent that included Gokkes.

For many Dutch composers, this new golden era was not to be, especially for the Dutch Jews who were persecuted by the Nazi regime. As previously stated, music composed by Dutch composers was very much underrepresented in the concert hall during the first half of the twentieth century. Ironically, after their occupation of the Netherlands in 1940, the Nazis introduced a policy of ensuring that there was a fair quota of Dutch music included in all concert programmes. Unfortunately, this was of no benefit whatsoever for the Dutch-Jewish composers whose music was forbidden or who cruelly perished at the hands of the Nazis.

The following is a summary of the Dutch composers who all had at least one thing in common with Gokkes: they were all Jewish, and they all lost their lives at the hands of, or because of the Nazis.

Daniel Belifante

Daniel Belifante was born on 6 March 1893, in the Watergraafsmeer district of Amsterdam. He died just before liberation on 27 January 1945, in Fürstengrube, a sub-camp of Auschwitz where he had been forced to do hard labour.

As well as being a composer, he was also the musical director of a music school in the Watergraafsmeer, where he also taught piano and composition. Educationally, Belifante was an innovator, and in 1934, along with his wife, he established the first Dutch jazz class, quite some time before jazz was introduced into the curriculum at the Dutch conservatoires.

After his death, most of his personal belongings were looted, but his music manuscripts were fortunately rescued, and reveal that, not unlike many of his Dutch contemporaries, Belifante was strongly influenced by French music. One very obvious influence is Darius Milhaud, with Belifante's use of bitonality and polytonality. Interestingly, he composed under several pseudonyms, including Darius le Beau and Darius Verdonk; perhaps a subtle acknowledgement of Milhaud's influence (Worms, 2015: 28-33).

Bob Hanf

Bob Hanf was born in Amsterdam on 25 November 1894 and perished in Auschwitz in 1944. In his younger days, as well as being a musician, he was also a writer and an artist, having had lessons from Amsterdam Impressionist artist George Breitner. In later years he concentrated on composing with most of his works remaining unpublished. He had a rather unconventional music journey as he studied chemistry and engineering at the Technical University in Delft, near The Hague. There were however opportunities for music-making in Delft, and in 1919 he became the co-founder of 'De Coornschuer', a venue where performances were regularly taking place. Hanf gave up his studies and in 1921 moved back to Amsterdam where he started to concentrate on composing music as well as studying the violin. He had a short spell as a professional violinist but had decided against pursuing that further by 1928.

Like much of the music of the German romantic style, his music was based on the use of motifs, as well as being chromatic in nature, although firmly remaining tonal. Hanf was a fairly introverted character and consequently, his music was in general performed not publicly, but privately. Because of this many of his works were never published. This is not to say that his works were totally unknown; his *Serenades* for woodwind, horns and strings were one of his few works to be publicly performed in 1937 by the Haarlem Orchestra. He even wrote a jingle for the food retailer 'Spar.' On April 23, 1944, he was arrested and sent to Auschwitz where he was murdered on September 30, 1944 (Pameijer, 2015: 101-106).

Mischa Hillesum

Mischa Hillesum, the brother of diarist Etty Hillesum, was born in Deventer, the Netherlands in 1920, and died in Warsaw in 1943 or 1944. He was a child prodigy as a pianist, and later impressed audiences with his virtuosity. By the age of 11, he had moved to foster parents in Amsterdam, and at the age of 13 he was studying piano at the Amsterdam Conservatory, possibly unofficially, where even at that age he was judged to be above the standard required for the final recital exams there. However, he had his inner demons to contend with and his behaviour was often strange and erratic, resulting in him spending time in Het Apeldoornsche Bosch, which was a Jewish psychiatric hospital. He was eventually diagnosed as being schizophrenic.

Although primarily a pianist, Hillesum did compose and his few, high-quality works were undoubtedly influenced by the music of his favourite composer Chopin. The only know compositions of his are two Préludes for piano, completed in 1939, and 1940 respectively. By1942, Hillesum had started taking an interest in Jewish music, specifically the *Fantasy of Jewish Melodies* by Maurits Samehtini, and after this, he also started performing in Klezmer ensembles at private home concerts. This was at a time when the performance of Jewish music was forbidden, and so he was putting himself in very real danger. His family were worried about the possibility of persecution, so his father wrote to Willem Andriessen, director of the Amsterdam Conservatory, to put in a good word on behalf of his son with the German authorities, impressing upon them how gifted Mischa was. Willem Mengelberg also wrote a letter of recommendation to the Nazis.

However, it was all of no avail, and on 20 June 1943, he and his family were sent to Westerbork transit camp. He was allowed to be involved in all sorts of musical activities at the camp, which was an irony considering that Jews were forbidden to perform music outside beyond captivity. On September 7, 1943, he was sent to Auschwitz, and from there to Warsaw to clean up the aftermath of the ghetto there. The exact date of his death is unknown, but he died there between October 1943 and March 1944 (Regenhardt, 2015: 123-128).

Dick Kattenburg

Dick Kattenburg was born in Amsterdam on 11 November 1919, the son of a successful textile manufacturer. He studied both in Antwerp and later at the Hague Conservatory under the guidance of the highly influential Dutch composer Willem Pijper. He graduated in 1941, but because he was Jewish, he almost immediately had to go into hiding, staying at numerous locations under different pseudonyms.

Kattenburg had a very short life, but as well as being a competent violinist managed to write over thirty compositions during a relatively short spell. On his return to Amsterdam from Antwerp he met and fell in love with a flautist by the name of Ima van Esso to whom who he dedicated his Sonata for flute and piano*,* the only work that he ever had publicly performed. Interestingly, during the wartime period Kattenburg, who was a liberal Jew, became more attracted to his faith and this is reflected in the nature of some of the music that he wrote at that time. It is particularly evident in his song cycle the *Songs of Palestine* (1940-1945), to which he gave the false title *Roemeense Melodie* on the front cover, clearly as not to attract unwanted attention from the Nazis who had by this time occupied the Netherlands.

His music was romantic in nature and often humorous and was particularly influenced by Ravel and Stravinsky's neoclassicism as illustrated by Kattenburg's use of flowing, expressive melodies and prominent rhythmic writing. There is also the use of jazz idioms as in the piano duet *Blues* of 1940, and it is a stylistic trait that often plays an important role in his music.

Kattenburg was arrested on 5 May 1944 and sent to Westerbork transit camp. Shortly after this on 19 May 1944 he was deported to Auschwitz where he was then murdered. He was twenty-five when he died (Alders, 2015a: 130-136).

Nico Richter

Nico Richter was born in Amsterdam on 2 December 1915 into a family who were non-practising Jews. He wanted to become a musician from an early age, having

started violin lessons at the age seven with Jacques Muller of the Concertgebouw Orchestra, and composing his first piece at the age of twelve.

Disregarding his obvious musical talents, his father, who was a dentist, insisted that Nico went go to Amsterdam University to study medicine instead. During that first year studying medicine, he had also enrolled to study music at the Amsterdam Conservatory and studied violin with Sepha Jansen (Muller, 2011: 12). Throughout his medical studies Richter continued to compose, and also conducted the university's student orchestra known as MUSA. He graduated in medicine in 1939 after which he chose to specialise in tropical medicine.

By 1940, anti-Jewish measures were implemented in the Netherlands and Richter became involved in a resistance group, at a time when he was also becoming increasingly aware of his Jewish heritage. In 1942, Richter was arrested and eventually incarcerated as a political prisoner at the Polizeiliches Durchganglager in Amesrsfoort where he was subjected to hard labour. He became weak and ill and spent much of the time in the infirmary. When he was discharged from the infirmary he was sent to Auschwitz, not as a Jew, but again, as a political prisoner. Upon arrival, he wasn't sent to the gas chambers due to his political status and instead was assigned to the camp hospital to work as a specialist in researching tropical diseases.

By 1944 the Russians were advancing upon Auschwitz, and Richter was then sent to Kaufering near Munich where he was subjected to intense heavy labour. He was weak and exhausted but still managed to carry on composing.

Richter was finally liberated by the American Army in 1945 but died soon after in Amsterdam that same year.

Unlike many Dutch composers at that time who were influenced by French music, Richter's music is very much of the Second Viennese School, with free tonality and short, symmetrical form (Muller van Santen, 2015: 190-196).

Andries de Rosa

Andries de Rosa was born in Amsterdam on 4 April 1869. Initially, he had trained to be a diamond cutter but later decided to teach himself music and eventually forge a career in it.

At around 1893, he went to Paris with this very intention, supplementing his musical income with being a correspondent for an arts magazine. By 1897 he had married Delphine Dreese who had just given birth to their second child. This meant that de Rosa had to move back to Amsterdam and resort to his skills as a diamond cutter; a profession that offered a better salary than what he was earning in Paris as a musician and writer.

When back in Amsterdam de Rosa was heavily involved in socialism and founded the College d'Esthetique Moderne which was an adult education facility for skilled workers. This, along with his involvement with the Workers' Association for Cremation (AVVL), which enabled workers to contribute towards the cost of otherwise costly cremations, something that was considered socialist and progressive at the time.

In 1941, all Jewish board members of AVVL were ordered by the Germans to resign from their posts. In February 1943, de Rosa and his wife were deported to Westerbork, and then six months later onto Sobibor where they immediately perished at the hands of the Nazis.

What little music Andries de Rosa wrote was influenced by the nineteenth-century style of Fauré and Bizet and were considered very easy on the ear. He composed for a variety of ensembles including *Chanson du Pecheur* (1909) for male choir and piano, *Berger et Bergere-Idylle Pur petit Orchestre* for orchestra, and several instrumental solos that gave performers a chance to show off their virtuosity (Bloemgarten, 2003).

Samuel Schuijer

Samuel Schuiler was born in The Hague on 9 September 1873. Most of his siblings became professional musicians, and Schuiler was no exception, going on to study violin and bassoon at The Hague Conservatory. After studying he became a professional bassoonist and was principal bassoon for several Dutch orchestras.

He was a multi-faceted musician and in 1902 he became conductor of the opera house in Ghent, Belgium, specialising in operetta. He later moved back to The Hague, and became conductor of the Kurhaus Orchestra, The Hague Philharmonic Orchestra, as well as forming his own orchestra in the 1920s. Schuiler also formed a string quartet known as the Residentie Quartet, and he always ensured that Dutch music was represented at least once in every concert programme.

Musically, Schuiler was considered a composer of 'salon music' and found it difficult to get his music performed in the Netherlands. There was much more to his music than that label would suggest; for example, his orchestral work *Preludium* was premiered with great acclaim in Stuttgart with the Philharmonic Orchestra there, under Schuijer's organisation and baton, in a programme comprising of only Dutch music. This would indicate that he felt very strongly about the under-representation of Dutch music in concert programmes of that time (Zwart, 2007).

He wrote a wide variety of music, including several operas, pieces for voice and piano, children's choir, various ensemble pieces and music for orchestra. His music often incorporated Dutch folk melodies, and his style was very much of the nineteenth century, which was gradually becoming more and more unfashionable between the two world wars.

Samuel Schuiler died in Auschwitz on 11 December,1942 (Alders, 2015c: 204-209).

Leo Smit

Leo Smit was born in Amsterdam on 14 May 1918. Although born into a Jewish family, with a grandfather, Jozef David Smit, who was cantor in the synagogue, Leo was raised with very little connection to the Jewish faith.

He always wanted to study music and eventually went to the Amsterdam Conservatory where he studied composition with Sem Dresden. He graduated in 1924 and right throughout his career his compositions for orchestra were considered good enough to be regularly performed by the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam. He also taught at the Amsterdam Conservatory, but like several of his Dutch contemporaries, he went to Paris in 1927 in order to 'broaden his horizons' (Vis, 2015). Whilst living in Paris Smit had contact with several well-known composers such as Darius Milhaud, a French composer who undoubtedly had an influence on him. Smit had no problems surviving financially in Paris, as his lifestyle was financed by his wealthy family, and by the family of his wife Lientje de Vries, who he married in 1933.

As well as his standard compositional repertoire, Smit also wrote film music, which was a new genre at that time. His score for the film *Jonge Harten* was highly successful and undoubtedly provided a more lucrative income.

Smit moved back to Amsterdam in 1937 and continued composing, and in 1940 his Concerto for Viola and String Orchestra was his last work to be performed by the Concertgebouw Orchestra before World War II started. After this, Jewish composers were forbidden from having their compositions performed in public venues.

Smit's compositional output was varied, with orchestral works, chamber music, concertos, choral, and vocal works. There a several musical influences at work in Smit's compositions: the French influence of Ravel and Debussy is evident with regards to his orchestration and use of rhythm, and there is also the influence of Stravinsky with his subtle use of Jazz and bitonality, something that can also possibly be attributed to the influence of Milhaud who he met when in Paris. The use of jazz is particularly evident in his first orchestral work, *Silhouetten* written in 1925 (Warszawski, 2010).

Much of his music survived the war due to the fact that he removed any trace of who had composed the music from the manuscripts and distributed them among his non-Jewish friends.

In March 1943 both Leo Smit and his wife were deported to Sobibor extermination camp and murdered immediately upon arrival (Vis, 2015: 218-224).

Martin Spanjaard

Martin Spanjaard was born into a wealthy family on 30 July 1892. He studied at the Koninklijk Conservatorium with Frits Koeberg, and later with Friedrich Gernsheim in Berlin where he was encouraged to conduct his own works with the conservatory orchestra.

Conducting was to play the larger and more successful part in his musical life, and while back in Amsterdam he became an assistant conductor for Mengelberg at the Concertgebouw, later returning to Berlin as Kapellmeister with the Berlin State Opera. He was very highly acclaimed and respected and later attained international success, working in Paris, and also working as a guest conductor for the Belin and Vienna Philharmonic Orchestras in concerts all over Europe. Eventually in 1940 when back in the Netherlands, war broke out and Spanjaard was forbidden to conduct any further.

Spanjaard's compositional output was limited, probably due to his huge commitments as a conductor. He mainly composed orchestral and vocal works, stylistically was a great advocate of Anton Bruckner, and had a great love of German romanticism. This is reflected in the style of his compositions, many of which remained unfinished.

On 2 August 1942 Martin Spanjaard and his wife Elly Okladek were deported to Auschwitz and murdered shortly afterwards on September 30 (Alders, 2015b: 234-240).

Jan van Gilse

Although not Jewish by faith, one other Dutch composer merits a mention in this section because of his tireless efforts in resisting Nazi efforts to marginalise Jewish musicians during the Occupation. Jan van Gilse was born in Rotterdam on 11 May 1881, and his musical education took place in Germany, at the Conservatory in Cologne in 1897 where he studied conducting and composition with Franz Wüllner. In 1902 he also later studied in Berlin with composer Engelbert Humperdinck.

For a short while, van Gilse worked as a rehearsal conductor at the Stadt Theatre in Bremen and was also fortunate to receive a music award that enabled him to work in Rome for two years. At the end of this period in 1911, he became homesick and moved back to Germany, settling in Munich with his wife Ada Hoojier. His time in Munich was at the time when World War I was well and truly underway, so it seemed wise for him and his family to eventually return to the Netherlands for reasons of safety (van Dijk, 2015: 89-94).

Van Gilse was from a politically active background; his father was a member of the government Liberal Union Party. In 1911, van Gilse and several other composers founded the Society of Dutch Composers *(GeNeCo),* and a few years later founded the Dutch Agency for Music-Copyright (*BUMA*) which was abolished by the Nazis in 1942. After the German invasion of the Netherlands, the Kultuurkamer was formed, and musicians had to be members in order to perform or have their works performed in public. He strongly objected to its formation and as an act of solidarity with marginalised Jewish composers he refused to join. Consequently, he was unable to have any of his compositions performed. Having also expressed an anti-National-Socialist attitude, he was also threatened with incarceration. In February 1942 the Germans raided his home, but fortunately, he had been tipped off and was able to go into hiding.

Stylistically, his earlier compositions were influenced by Richard Strauss and late German-romanticism and its heavy scoring, but by 1923 there was a subtle use of the French impressionistic style of Ravel, with thinner orchestration and a ‘more transparent sound image’ (van Dijk, 2014). He did eventually develop his own style

which sounded quite modern but wasn't considered an innovator at the time. In his book *Het Muziekleven in Nederland Sinds 1880,* Sem Dresden acknowledges van Gilse and some of his contemporaries as up-and-coming modern composers, but he is quite critical of how these composers were developing. Dresden was of the opinion that 'none of them [were developing] in a special way, [they] do not distinguish themselves by moving in a direction by adopting unusual properties or revealing qualities that would result in a later strong development' (Dresden, 1923: 103-105).

Both his sons were active in the resistance from 1943 to 1944 but were killed by the Nazis. Van Gilse, who himself was still in hiding, never came to terms with this loss and after that, he became very ill, eventually dying in hospital under a false name on 8 September 1944.

Missing from the list is, of course, Sim Gokkes, who, along with his family, was murdered in Auschwitz in 1942.