

*When Opportunism Knocks: Evaluating the Career of German Popular Entertainment Musician Peter Kreuder in the Third Reich**

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The manner in which historians approach the relationship between National Socialist Germany and its resident composers, conductors, and musicians often is shaped by their notions of what constitutes proper behavior for artists living under totalitarianism. To take a particularly interesting example, the quality of being “opportunistic” – normally valued in modern, performance-driven, capitalistic democracies¹ – is viewed as overwhelmingly negative in artists who lived under National Socialism. Indeed, the term “opportunist” is a particularly under-scrutinized, yet highly damning description applied to Third Reich artists.

The examination of *Unterhaltungsmusiker*² Peter Kreuder (1905–1981) by the Aachen historian Dietmar Kottmann provides a case in point. Commissioned by the city of Aachen in late 2004 to shed light upon Kreuder’s career under Nazism, the investigation initiated a public discussion in which little enthusiasm could be mustered for a nuanced portrayal. The irksome, notoriously self-absorbed Kreuder, aside from being considered personally disreputable,³ was repeatedly deemed unworthy of more subtle treatment due to the general consensus that he was a self-serving opportunist. The ease of moral certitude trumped the much more complex consideration of Kreuder’s career decisions.

This essay examines Peter Kreuder’s commercially successful Third Reich career and offers a response to the prevailing manner in which many modern historians and musicologists invoke the notion of opportunism. The latter approach frequently fails to address

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exactly who qualifies for membership amongst the ranks of the opportunists, who eludes such an unseemly designation, and who presides over the matter. The aim of this essay is not to rehabilitate the damaged reputation of Peter Kreuder by rescuing him from the label “opportunist.” Rather, it addresses the remarkably loose manner in which the term opportunism is often applied and what is lost as a result: the thorough and dispassionate evaluation of an historical biography that can unlock potentially meaningful insight. The present employment of opportunism at times hinders recognition of the value of studying the lives of musicians who have apparent moral shortcomings.

The Term “Opportunism” in Postwar Biographies and Third Reich Historiography

In postwar biographies that address musicians and their work in the Third Reich, the usage of “opportunist” relies upon the term’s conventional dictionary definition; *Random House* defines opportunism as “the practice of adapting one’s actions or decisions to expediency or effectiveness, without regard to principles or consequences.”⁴ This standard usage, adopted by the present study as well, is overwhelmingly negative in its application to a subject’s biography, suggesting that career accomplishments achieved under the rubric of “opportunist” are morally stained due to their unscrupulous origin. Despite the gravity of such insinuations, historical biographies rarely explicate what exactly is meant by the term.

The four works social historian Michael Kater described as defining the field before the arrival of his well-received *The Twisted Muse* in 1997 generally avoided the term “opportunist”; Joseph Wulf’s annotated collection and Erik Levi’s book omit reference to it, while Michael Meyer utilizes the word, but does not explain it.⁵ Furthermore, Fred Prieberg does not make use of the term in *Musik im NS-Staat* even though the book launches a spirited assault on musicians who, in post-war years, attempted to conceal their successful careers under the Nazi regime.⁶ In *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany* Kater entertains the terminology of opportunism in discussing the careers of various Third Reich jazz artists, but refrains from explaining what is meant by this designation or how its usage was derived.⁷ The same is true of Kater’s otherwise highly nuanced chapter on Werner Egk in *Composers of the Nazi Era: Eight Portraits*.⁸ A chapter subsection of Kater’s *The Twisted Muse*,

entitled “Music, Economics, and Political Opportunism,” also fails to provide a basis for how the application of the “opportunist” label should be governed.⁹

If Kater did not feel compelled to explicate the term beyond its standard definition, perhaps the meaning should be rather apparent. A layman’s understanding of the moral negativity and unprincipled behavior implied by “professional” or “political” opportunism may in fact perfectly suffice to describe many artists lives under National Socialism. The problem is that a great deal of ambiguity characterizes the manner in which this morally weighty label is assigned. There appears to be no discernable standard with which scholars judge historical subjects and affix the designation “opportunist.”

The “gallant” jazz pianist Fritz Schulze, for instance, was a five-year member of the Nazi SS (*Schutzstaffel*) and enjoyed frequenting “Berlin’s swankiest, smoothest, snootiest night spot” at a time when, for political reasons, he replaced the Jewish pianist who played at the Sherbini-Bar.¹⁰ Schulze, however, receives remarkably favorable treatment at the hands of Kater, who interviewed him for *Different Drummers*. The same is true for Hans Korseck, who performed jazz-inspired background music at official functions attended by Goebbels and Hitler.¹¹ Kater reports that Korseck nevertheless harbored a secret hatred of the Nazis due in part to losing his Jewish girlfriend to emigration, and that he later married a woman who had been interrogated by the Gestapo and “declared enemy” of the regime.¹² Clearly though, scholars have the wherewithal to ease any strain on a musician’s Third Reich legacy by kindly formulating that individual’s biography. How, for example, does Korseck’s secret hatred of the Nazis or his connection with a Jewish émigré disqualify him from inclusion in the unsavory club of opportunists, if his professional behavior appears to warrant membership?

Two issues arise from the manner in which the prevailing notion of opportunism is employed. The first involves the ill-defined demarcation line between musicians such as Schulze and Korseck, who achieved Third Reich success, yet were apparently deemed worthy of favorable scholarly treatment, and a musician such as Kreuder, who is introduced as “the opportunist” and critiqued for his moral bankruptcy. Kater notes, for example, that “At least [Fritz] Schulze admits that the idea of SS-organized concentration camps was beginning to bother him.... He also concedes his opportunism.”¹³ Perhaps this postwar admission of guilt provides some sense of clarity: the historical subject, now living under democracy,

can obtain clemency in his historiographic depiction by confessing to the sin of opportunism. The problem of selectively applying the terminology to certain individuals and not to others persists, however, for while the conventional usage of opportunism may be self-evident, the scholarly criteria for duly assigning the label remain obscure.

This question of selectivity would not be of such import were it not seconded by a palpable sense of moral disapproval. There can be little doubt that attaching the distasteful label “opportunist” to a Third Reich musician’s name is equal to a durable moral discrediting. After all, it is the opportunist who behaves “without regard to principles.”¹⁴ Those who lived and worked under similar circumstances but avoided such a distinction are thus presumed to have conducted themselves in a more principled manner. Therefore, the scholar enjoys the capacity to cast favorable light upon some artists of the Third Reich, while bestowing the enduring stigma of opportunism upon others as he sees fit.

The case study of Peter Kreuder demonstrates how uncritical usage of the “opportunist” label unnecessarily simplifies the biographical assessment of a Third Reich musician. The outcome is not necessarily a misidentification as opportunist per se, but an enduring misrepresentation of the inherent complexity of an artist’s life under totalitarianism, whereby even career activities considered wholly apolitical under democracy, such as scoring comedic feature films or recording *Schlager* music, can be interpreted by scholars as politically irresponsible after the fact. In this regard, the 2004–2005 controversy over Kreuder’s past is worthy of attention due to the myopic fashion in which an exceedingly difficult question was approached: how should scholars evaluate the careers of musicians who willingly remained in Germany and enjoyed relatively successful, unfettered careers while the National Socialist state prominently harassed, imprisoned, deported, forced to flee, or murdered entire minority groups?

Peter Kreuder: Biography and Controversy

As Peter Kreuder is almost completely unknown in North America, his life and career warrants a brief overview. Born on August 18, 1905, to a respected chamber music singer of the same name, Kreuder’s musical training was rooted in serious music. He attended master classes in composition with Ferruccio Busoni in Berlin in 1920, and completed his training as a composer, conductor,

and pianist at Munich’s Staatliche Akademie der Tonkunst in 1924.¹⁵ However, Kreuder much preferred the so-called *leichte Muse* (“the light muse”), and it is in the genre of light entertainment music that the young artist first experienced success during the Weimar period as musical assistant to the likes of Friedrich Hollaender.¹⁶ Not long after the onset of the Third Reich, Kreuder’s career skyrocketed to a remarkable level of commercial success that lasted the duration of the regime, making him a household name for many Germans. Aside from writing the scores to thirty feature films, which resulted in forty-one hit songs and a reputation as “King of the Evergreens,”¹⁷ Kreuder was also prolific in the studio and on tour, producing over ninety-one gramophone records from July 1933 to January 1944 and performing an indeterminable number of concerts throughout Germany, Scandinavia, and occupied Europe.¹⁸ Kreuder became an Austrian citizen in 1959 after moving to Alt-Aussee during the Second World War. Thereafter his Third Reich biography remained “nontransparent and disputed.”¹⁹ Kreuder nevertheless enjoyed substantial postwar success by writing musicals for Zarah Leander and Johannes Heesters, undertaking multiple European and world tours with renown artists such as Josephine Baker, and collecting numerous achievement awards before his death in Salzburg in 1981.²⁰

The controversy surrounding the composer’s postwar biography began in November 2004, when Kreuder’s widow accused the Aachen municipal government of hindering her efforts to have a street named for her husband due to his alleged “Nazi” past.²¹ In response, the city initiated a “very careful inquiry and consideration” into Kreuder’s Third Reich biography to clarify the situation.²² The city government of Aachen proceeded with caution, for it previously had found itself in the embarrassing predicament of explaining how two streets near the Technical University were named in honor of prominent former Nazis.²³ These street-name controversies followed a public relations catastrophe in 1995, when the ex-rector of the Technical University was exposed by Dutch journalists as a former *Schutzstaffel* (SS) captain.²⁴ Aachen’s painful experiences with the biographies of its ex-Nazi sons may well have influenced its decision in the spring of 2005 to refrain from organizing any public celebration for the one-hundredth anniversary of Kreuder’s birth, and to firmly reject proposals to name a street for him.

This government-commissioned, highly public, and “very careful” scholarly inquiry was of great import because it would

shape the way in which citizens perceive the Third-Reich biography of Kreuder. It was carried out by historian Dietmar Kottmann of the Aachen Historical Society (*Aachener Geschichtsverein*), who concluded that Kreuder incriminated himself through his troubling behavior under the regime.²⁵ This was echoed by *Aachener Nachrichten* editor Gerald Eimer in his May 2005 editorial “The ‘King of the Evergreens’ was rather brown.”²⁶

To summarize Kottmann’s argument, Kreuder was unworthy of “a public tribute of any kind” due to the opportunism inherent in becoming a member of the Nazi Party (NSDAP) at the early date of 1932, and having composed the scores for three short documentary-propaganda films that are conspicuously absent from his catalogue of works: *Tag der Freiheit—Unsere Wehrmacht!* (twenty-eight minutes, 1935), *Wort und Tat* (ten minutes, 1938), and *Gestern und heute* (eleven minutes, 1938).²⁷ Kreuder also composed the music to the stage production *Liebe Trommeln und Fanfaren*, the text of which Dr. Adolf Wagner—the former Bavarian minister of state, Munich Gauleiter, and SA-Obergruppenführer—wrote and premiered at the 1938 Day of German Art (*Tag der Deutschen Kunst*) in Munich. Kreuder’s publisher later advertised this work to various Reich theaters and opera houses as expressing the spirit of the times.²⁸ Kottmann further points out that Kreuder, having “obediently” presented his proof of Aryan lineage (*Ariernachweis*) for membership in the Reich Music Chamber (RMK) of the Reich Chamber of Culture (RKK), fabricated his own alleged political exile to Sweden in 1939 and supposed arrest by the SS in Berlin two years later.²⁹ Kottmann levies his most serious charges against Kreuder’s unabashed commercial success in the genre of *Unterhaltungsmusik*. The Aachen historian cites the well-documented intention of Joseph Goebbels, Reich Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, to utilize light entertainment music for “relaxation and stress relief for front and homeland.”³⁰ Kottmann argues that Kreuder “precisely in the last years of the war willingly placed himself at the service of Goebbels” to assist in “stabilizing the home front and supporting the fighting spirit of the soldiers” by “delivering light entertainment fare.”³¹

In advancing his thesis, Kottmann often echoes the argumentation inherent in Peter Wicke’s “Das Ende: Populäre Musik im faschistischen Deutschland,” which underscores Goebbels’s intent to utilize popular music to bolster the resilience of the Nazi regime.³² Goebbels, who decreed in 1942 that musical entertainment through radio was vital to the war effort, advocated broadcasting large

amounts of apolitical, breezy entertainment music to “make the listener receptive to the goals of particular spoken-word broadcasts.... The more music that is broadcast on the radio, the more open the listener becomes to the spoken word.”³³ Wicke deprecatingly refers to this music as consisting of “sentimental and romantic clichés ... [that] had never been any kind of response to social reality at the time of the Weimar Republic” and whose “nonsensical hit lyrics had merely created a prettified gloss of private sentimentality.”³⁴ Wicke argues that this music was subsequently placed at the feet of the Nazi regime by its subservient, morally compromised, and politically irresponsible creators—entertainment musicians like Kreuder.

Two observations can be ventured concerning Kottmann’s thesis and his general application of Wicke’s argument. The first relates to the non-propaganda quality of Kreuder’s work. Significantly, Kottmann observes that militaristic propaganda music played a miniscule role in Kreuder’s career: “The greatest part of Kreuder’s very considerable body of work in the period from 1933 to 1945 is predominantly wholly apolitical, light-hearted and easy going ... fight songs and marching music fit less to his personality and musical style.”³⁵ What lies at the heart of the controversy surrounding the composer is not his propaganda music, however, but his production of “apolitical, light-hearted,” clichéd *Schlager*.³⁶ Thus, the question arises: if a celebrated musician produces large quantities of light entertainment music while overwhelmingly steering clear of political propaganda commissions, but nevertheless is considered supportive of a dictatorship’s war effort, what professional behavior would the social historian find morally acceptable? The failure of either Wicke or Kottmann to suggest an appropriate course of action for artists under totalitarianism is, in light of their strongly moralizing critique of Kreuder, conspicuous and disappointing.³⁷

A second observation highlights an inconsistency in Wicke’s and Kottmann’s reliance upon Goebbels’s embrace of entertainment music. Wicke’s description of the irresponsibly apolitical *Schlager* is at direct odds with his own citation of Goebbels’s speech at the November 1933 RKK opening ceremony, in which he describes the National Socialist view of German art as:

A kind of romanticism of steel that has made German life worth living once again: a romanticism that does not hide from the harshness of existence, nor seeks to escape from it

into the blue yonder; a romanticism which has the mettle to face ruthless problems and look them firmly and unflinchingly in the eye.³⁸

It is difficult here to reconcile Wicke's and Kottmann's simultaneous appreciation of Kreuder's escapist, sentimental, cliché-ridden *Schlager* and Goebbels's steely, unflinching Nazi ideal of art. Such contradiction is not isolated among the biographies of Third Reich popular musicians, but is a long-recognized aspect of National Socialism's complex and arduous relationship with the popular music industry. Given the regime's own inability or indisposition to declare uniformly the definition and parameters of jazz, swing, *Schlager*, and dance music, it seems problematic to argue that musicians like Kreuder were buttressing the regime through its production. A close analysis of key events in Kreuder's life during the Third Reich reveals an ambiguity that complicates the semblance of moral clarity inherent in the approach taken by Wicke and Kottmann.

Assessing Ambiguity in Kreuder's Third Reich Career

A close appraisal of Kreuder's reception during the Third Reich casts doubt on the notion that he effectively aided the criminal regime by pursuing a popular music career. When this is interwoven with a nuanced and detailed evaluation of the regime's own assessment of the composer, not only does one discover that Kreuder intentionally eluded membership in the RMK until near the end of the Reich, but also that the regime itself could not agree that Kreuder "willingly placed himself at the service of Goebbels" to stabilize the home front and boost soldier morale at the end of the war.³⁹

To begin, the preponderance of swing, *Schlager*, and American dance music in Kreuder's Third Reich repertoire found significant influence in jazz,⁴⁰ a genre National Socialism officially considered "alien to the national spirit"⁴¹ and linked to racially and morally degenerate black Americans and Jews.⁴² The extent of this influence was such that not only did contemporary German audiences view Kreuder as performing and conducting jazz and jazz-styled dance music, but various experts have also confirmed Kreuder's jazz credentials.⁴³ Kreuder's first documented conflict with National Socialism over his penchant for jazz dates from a 1932 Munich concert with his own jazz orchestra, the fashionably Anglophilic "Peter Kreuder and his Soloists." In a review entitled "Ein Jazz-

Rummel in München," the local National Socialist *Völkischer Beobachter* gave the concert a scathing, racist review: "The conductor Moritz Kreuder ... might as well go to Africa to showcase his talents there; he certainly would not find any Hottentot who would stop him."⁴⁴ In addition to the review's vehemently hostile tone toward Kreuder, and its disparagement of Kreuder's orchestra for having "incorporated all races" into its ranks while performing its "sub-human carryings-on," the author bemoaned that no police action was taken against the young bandleader.⁴⁵

Though Kreuder addresses this incident in his memoirs without his characteristic bravado and disregard for historical accuracy,⁴⁶ he refrains from informing the reader that only five months later, August 1, 1932, he joined the very NSDAP whose party newspaper had lambasted him.⁴⁷ However, the highly negative associations that Kottmann and the *Aachener Nachrichten* made with this evidence of Kreuder's NSDAP membership—in particular that the composer was "close" to the Nazi regime's most important leaders and that he enjoyed "a good relationship" with Hitler himself—are misleading at best.⁴⁸ The closeness of the date Kreuder became a member of the NSDAP to the *Völkischer Beobachter's* public attack on him was neglected, as was the remarkably early date of Kreuder's NSDAP membership termination (November 1934). The early conclusion of Kreuder's party membership, concealed from the Aachen public in 2005,⁴⁹ is particularly noteworthy as it preceded the composer's first significant commercial success with the film score for *Mazurka* (1935).

The notion that Kreuder could have benefited nonetheless from the regime's mistaken impression that he was still a party member can be discounted by consulting Kreuder's RKK file, in which he is described explicitly as a non-NSDAP member.⁵⁰ This status is traceable to the end of October 1944, very late in the life of the Reich.⁵¹ Pursuing the matter further, one discovers that by March of 1932 three of Kreuder's most public musical endeavors had been rejected, attacked in print, or physically disrupted by National Socialist organizations. These include the Munich premiere of Ernst Krenek's jazz-and-racially-themed opera *Jonny spielt auf*, which Kreuder claimed to have worked on as a musical assistant,⁵² the Friedrich Hollaender compositions that Kreuder arranged and directed for Joseph von Sternberg's *The Blue Angel* (1930), and the aforementioned 1932 Munich jazz concert.

On the basis of the archival material, it is clear that the young composer joined the NSDAP out of "opportunistic" motives;

indeed, Kreuder's party membership date falls on the day after the NSDAP's dramatic success in the July 31 parliamentary elections, when the NSDAP became the Reichstag's largest party.⁵³ It nevertheless remains unclear why in 2005 Kottmann emphasized Kreuder's joining of the NSDAP while failing to publicize National Socialist attacks on the artist or the early termination of his party affiliation.⁵⁴ It could be that the careful, contextualized analysis of a historical subject like Kreuder impedes an otherwise moralistically transparent analysis. Why, one might otherwise ask, would a committed opportunist let his invaluable party membership be terminated in late 1934, less than two years after Adolf Hitler became chancellor?⁵⁵

A closer look at Peter Kreuder's subsequent reception in the Third Reich reveals reactions so decidedly mixed—ranging from vehement rejection to spirited embrace—that the responses of audiences and radio listeners, cultural critics and censors, as well as Goebbels and RKK director Hans Hinkel were in a state of flux until the demise of the regime. Although one should not discount Kreuder's few but noteworthy propaganda commissions, the composer's work was also, on occasion, censored, deemed degenerate or undesirable, and banned. This is not to argue that Kreuder's vita should be viewed even remotely as that of an opponent of the regime, or that his biography should be treated more mildly. Rather, such contradictory experiences in Kreuder's career are deserving of academic inquiry since they demonstrate the complexity of the artist's life in the Third Reich.

Examples of Kreuder's more negative reception under the National Socialist regime, which were not cited during the 2005 Aachen controversy, include Kreuder's score to Willy Zielke's surrealist-influenced documentary, *Das Stahltier* (1935). Zielke's film, created for the 100-year jubilee of the Nürnberg-Fürther railroad, was censored and never screened during the Third Reich due to the documentary's avant-garde, "decadent" aesthetic.⁵⁶ It is also noteworthy that Kreuder's work made it into the notorious 1938 "Entartete Musik" ("Degenerate Music") exhibition in Düsseldorf in the form of the Friedrich Hollaender music Kreuder arranged in von Sternberg's *The Blue Angel*.⁵⁷ For his part, Kreuder apparently had no qualms about referring to his collaboration with *Blue Angel* director von Sternberg and singer-actress Marlene Dietrich in a 1937 interview.⁵⁸ While Axel Jockwer of the Universität Konstanz notes that it must not have been taboo at this point to associate oneself openly with Dietrich, who later agitated against the regime,

Jockwer overlooks Kreuder's public admission of working with the Jewish von Sternberg just over two years after the Nuremberg Race Laws were enacted.⁵⁹

Kottmann has emphasized that official stamps affixed to Kreuder's RKK file indicate that the composer was considered politically inoffensive by the Reich Security Head Office (RSHA) and therefore cleared for performing before German troops.⁶⁰ The same file card, however, indicates that the regime turned against Kreuder's music: "Dissemination of the piece *Träumereien* [*sic*] by Schumann as interpreted by P.K. undesirable in Germany. Reason: Jazzification."⁶¹ The Reich Music Inspection Authority (*Reichsmusikprüfstelle*) Second List of Undesirable Musical Works from April 15, 1940, which banned Kreuder's jazzed rendition of Robert Schumann's *Träumerei*, confirms this statement.⁶² The irony is lost on the Aachen critics: Kreuder was assessed as a willful supporter of regime policy on account of the RSHA having found no political complications with him and thus having cleared him for troop performances.⁶³ The fact that the same regime invoked the 1939 "Directive for the Protection of Musical Objects of Cultural Value"⁶⁴ to protect German ears from Kreuder's "undesirable and harmful" work,⁶⁵ however, was excluded from the public discussion.

Although Jockwer notes that Kreuder's music was subject to numerous "partial bans" (*Teilverbote*) in 1941 and observes that Kreuder narrowly avoided a complete radio ban in 1942,⁶⁶ perhaps the most surprising aspect of Kreuder's biography is the fact that it refutes the widespread belief that it was necessary for Third Reich musicians to become RMK members in order to pursue a career.⁶⁷ As Prieberg explains in *Musik im NS-Staat*, to acquire RMK membership a musician was required to provide proof of Aryan descent by means of presenting one's birth and baptismal certificates in addition to those of one's four grandparents.⁶⁸ This proof of lineage was then submitted with a completed questionnaire that inquired into one's past professional and political activities as well as one's status under the Nuremberg Race Laws.⁶⁹ Every Reich musician received a questionnaire and with it tentative RMK membership until the question of one's racial descent could be clarified. For composers, this process picked up speed only in 1938.⁷⁰ The questionnaire's purpose was to expose Jewish and other unwanted "non-Aryan" musicians as defined under the Nuremberg Laws.⁷¹ What makes Peter Kreuder's case study as an opportunist particularly interesting is his curious refusal over a period of six years to provide the RKK with proof of Aryan descent.

Kreuder's RKK file reveals that he was officially assigned to a professional association for musicians (*Fachschaft II der Reichsmusikerschaft*) and thus enjoyed provisional RMK membership. However, it also documents how he continuously and intentionally eluded the demands of the authorities to prove himself "Aryan" to gain official membership to the RMK. Beginning in September 1937, fourteen pieces of correspondence lay out an exchange between the *Reichsmusikerschaft* and Kreuder.⁷² First, an official letter was sent to Kreuder requesting the questionnaire and three passport photos.⁷³ The musician's response—signed "Heil Hitler!"—stated that the matter must be postponed to the following month due to concert tours and studio work.⁷⁴ Two terse reminders were duly sent to Kreuder the next month.⁷⁵ Kreuder answered with another note, in which he stated that the request could not be fulfilled for another two weeks; once again he signed it "Heil Hitler!"⁷⁶ After the *Fachschaft* complained in writing to the RMK inspection authorities,⁷⁷ a breakthrough was achieved: Kreuder mailed three passport photos—but without proof of Aryan descent.⁷⁸ The cycle began anew; the musician was directed to produce the questionnaire and *Ariernachweis* as soon as possible.⁷⁹ However, Kreuder ignored this and two further notices.⁸⁰ After the *Reichsmusikerschaft* complained to RMK President Peter Raabe,⁸¹ the unnerving musician again sent three passport photos and a note ending with "Heil Hitler!" Once again Kreuder omitted the requested questionnaire.⁸² Kreuder was then directed to produce proof of Aryan descent,⁸³ but failed to respond. When Kreuder's Scala-Orchestra was checked for identification cards on February 12, 1940, by an RMK inspector—over three months after Kreuder's previous documented warning—the inspector reported being confronted by a belligerent, uncooperative Kreuder. The inspector conducted his own research and independently confirmed that Kreuder had failed to pay his membership dues, had not submitted his proof of Aryan descent, and lacked an RMK identification card.⁸⁴

This exchange led Kottmann to conclude that, "Kreuder must have performed publicly and worked in the studios for years without an RMK membership card."⁸⁵ However, Kreuder's behavior becomes more difficult to understand in light of the composer's relatively timely compliance with the Bavarian government's spring 1938 request for proof of Aryan lineage.⁸⁶ Thus, during a portion of the same six-year period in which Kreuder purposely avoided complying with RMK ordinances, he "promptly and dutifully" presented the same information in Munich.⁸⁷

This situation does not appear to have been a mere misunderstanding on Kreuder's part: there is no evidence that Kreuder notified the persistent and increasingly annoyed Berlin authorities that he had dutifully sent his documentation to the Bavarian bureaucracy.⁸⁸ Furthermore, the Bavarian authorities promptly returned Kreuder's personal documents, indicating that the composer would have been in full possession of the necessary papers during the period in question.⁸⁹ While Kreuder's uncooperative conduct with the RMK should not be interpreted as political resistance to the regime, it nevertheless complicates the facile dismissal of Kreuder under the rubric of rank opportunism. Though Kreuder had little to fear from the questionnaire due to his lack of Communist, Social Democrat, or Freemasonry affiliation, and though his "Aryan" lineage and early NSDAP membership number were verifiable (the latter, despite being expired, conceivably could have been turned to his advantage), the composer's official RKK file indicates that the proof of Aryan heritage requested by the Berlin central authorities was not produced until as late as December 1943—six years after the initial request.⁹⁰ Furthermore, only in April 1944 did Kreuder begin paying his membership dues.⁹¹

While it is reasonable that scholars have exhibited strong skepticism regarding Kreuder's claims to never have been a member of the RMK (nor a member of the NSDAP),⁹² his case demonstrates what was possible for popular musicians under Nazism. The "opportunist" Kreuder not only allowed his NSDAP membership to expire at an extremely early date, but also willfully and continuously defied mandatory RMK membership with the Berlin authorities until late in the Reich. While this conduct by no means makes Kreuder a resistance figure or regime opponent, Kreuder's documents appear to contradict what one often reads about the all-encompassing character of obligatory RMK affiliation. One is thus faced with the dilemma of determining why an opportunist musician purposely hindered his own professional advancement.

Moreover, Kreuder's behavior appears increasingly inexplicable the more thoroughly one researches his Third Reich past. The composer's late and reluctant RMK membership, as well as his almost total radio ban, can be better understood by examining Kreuder's tenuous relationship to the regime after being denounced by his concert agent, Clara Gunderloch. Kottmann's research reveals that, as a result of canceling thirty concerts throughout the Rhineland in 1942,⁹³ the musician was sued by Gunderloch in 1943 for breach of contract.⁹⁴ Through a lawyer, Gunderloch communicated to the

Propaganda Ministry that Kreuder was guilty of cowardice, as the Rhineland was under frequent Allied bombing attacks during this period. The Propaganda Ministry considered these charges credible, and an internal debate soon ensued within the ministry to determine what to do with the troublesome composer. Goebbels eventually shelved the issue in April 1944—the same month Kreuder finally paid his first RMK dues.⁹⁵ Kottmann concluded from these findings that Goebbels's decision proves that the composer enjoyed and could always depend upon strong support from the highest echelons of the regime.⁹⁶

An alternative, yet conventional, reading of these sources reveals a much more complex biographical image of the composer that frustrates the attempt to depict Kreuder as an eager, reliable regime partner. The reason is simple: Kottmann's argument regarding Goebbels's decision wholly overlooks the fact that the Propaganda Ministry officials who debated Kreuder's fate expressly agree that the man was an untrustworthy, undeserving, and even a lousy representative of the Reich. This ministerial discussion took place in the context of Kreuder's disastrous Swedish escapade of 1939–1941. As far as can be ascertained, Kreuder left Munich in 1939 under some duress after cheating on his wife.⁹⁷ Kreuder's orchestra had already been scheduled for a Scandinavian tour, at the conclusion of which Kreuder simply remained in Sweden, subsequently giving rise to the misleading notion that the composer was forced into Swedish exile.⁹⁸

Propaganda Ministry memos from this time confirm that the composer indeed "traveled ... to Sweden while under breach of contract and owing taxes."⁹⁹ While in Sweden, he accumulated large debts and became the subject of "various derogatory remarks" and "disagreeable discussions" in the Scandinavian press.¹⁰⁰ The Propaganda Ministry's Music Bureau complained bitterly to the Personnel Bureau in December 1943 that:

Kreuder's behavior, which has endangered the German prestige abroad in the most serious manner, in addition to his cowardly demeanor in the homeland, has made it unbearable for Bureau M to continue to support his military exempt status, *which has as its preconditions that the exempt individuals are morally irreproachable and that their exemption from the military contributes to the strengthening of the resisting power of the homeland. Kreuder fulfils neither one of these criteria [emphasis mine].*¹⁰¹

The Personnel Bureau concurred, stating that it held Kreuder's objections to be "excuses" and representative of "a lack of good will."¹⁰² The Personnel official also assessed Kreuder as having failed to uphold a key RKK regulation that requires members to "avoid anything that is detrimental to the German national community, culture, and economy."¹⁰³ Only in matters of pragmatism did this Personnel official stray from the position of his colleagues. He concluded that continued employment of Kreuder would be "more purposeful" than sending him to the army "because in that case he surely would not end up on the front, but rather be kept in some officer's club as a piano player."¹⁰⁴

This exchange followed a discussion from June 1942 concerning Kreuder's behavior in Sweden. Here the German embassy in Stockholm, the Reich Foreign Office, and the Propaganda Ministry conferred with one another as to whether Kreuder should be allowed to leave the Reich again. The consensus was "no"; the Foreign Office wrote on June 10, that "After the report made by the embassy, it appears undesirable to me *that Kreuder should travel abroad as a representative of German art [emphasis mine].*"¹⁰⁵ The German embassy in Stockholm warned that it was not advisable to issue Kreuder a travel permit to Sweden as the latter would presumably deny him entry.¹⁰⁶ The Propaganda Ministry, on special request from the Foreign Office, finally settled the issue in December 1943 by barring Kreuder from performing abroad.¹⁰⁷

Goebbels took note of the ministry debate and duly shelved the matter in a two-sentence memo in the spring of 1944.¹⁰⁸ Clearly he did not do so because Kreuder was a darling of the Nazi regime who enthusiastically placed himself at Goebbels's service. However, Goebbels's act would not have taken place if Kreuder had not repositioned himself for gainful employment by completing the registration to increase his chances for a safe return to the Reich. An analysis of Kreuder's career that refrains from the character judgments so often inherent to the notion of "opportunism" clearly extracts much more complex and nuanced information regarding his professional life than any wholesale dismissal on moral grounds for having pursued a Third Reich music career.

Conclusion

As a case study, Kreuder's life offers a glimpse of the spectrum of behavior and achievement that was possible for an entertainment artist under Nazism. Precisely because Kreuder was neither a

staunch Nazi, a resistance figure, nor a reliably consistent “opportunist,” he is a rich subject for biographical inquiry. The Peter Kreuder who produced the nationalistic-propagandistic march “70 Millionen – ein Schlag. Das deutsche Volk am Donaustrand,” recommended for performance by the Bavarian Ostmark gau and featured at numerous significant National Socialist events in 1937,¹⁰⁹ was likewise the composer of the 1936 *Schlager* “Ich wollt’ ich wär ein Huhn” (“I Wish I Were a Chicken”).¹¹⁰ The latter provoked the wrath of the SS paper *Schwarzes Korps*, which bashed Kreuder and his work as clandestinely “Jewish,” if not by blood then in style, and threatened that, should Kreuder’s humor not fit the character of the German people, any effort on his part to force the issue would be an attempt “that one day could be stopped—by force.”¹¹¹

Kreuder’s decidedly mixed biography, consisting of various instances of accommodating behavior toward the regime juxtaposed with recklessly individualistic, non-opportunistic conduct, is surely not singular amongst German musicians in the Third Reich. In the present day, however, it is often a case of “hit or miss” as to whether similar cases of biographical ambiguity are highlighted. For instance, Johnny Klimek and Reinhold Heil’s soundtrack to the 2004 feature film *Sophie Scholl: Die letzten Tage* contains the sentimental and slow foxtrot “Durch die Nacht klingt ein Lied” (1942) played by the jazz-oriented Willi Stanke group—a successful *Wehrmacht* orchestra that performed entertainment music under the auspices of the “Soldaten spielen für Soldaten” program.¹¹² Certainly the biography of the Stanke orchestra raises questions for those who support the arguments of Wicke and Kottmann: how could it be appropriate that a German bandleader such as Willi Stanke, who not only remained commercially successful and professionally active for the duration of the Third Reich, but directly supported Reich military morale by playing for German troops for a living, quietly make it onto an otherwise entirely English and American soundtrack commemorating Sophie Scholl, one of Germany’s most cherished and celebrated resistance figures? Is it not ironic that the doomed young members of the “White Rose” resistance group were charged with *Wehrmachtzersetzung* (the undermining or sabotaging of German armed forces morale) for distributing antiwar leaflets and were thus beheaded for engaging in precisely the opposite behavior Willi Stanke pursued in his career? Far from initiating controversy, the inclusion of the Stanke orchestra in the *Sophie Scholl* soundtrack passed quietly. Indeed, the Willi Stanke Orchestra graces such widely-disseminated “banned jazz” compilations as Proper

Records’s *Swing Tanzen Verboten! Swing Music and Nazi-Propaganda Swing During World War II* (2003). Here the group is represented with no less than five tracks, giving many unwitting listeners the impression that Stanke and his men somehow belonged to that disenfranchised side of Third Reich musical life.¹¹³

Composer and pianist Peter Kreuder also represents a compelling subject for many Germans of the war generation who, much like their present-day counterparts in the former Allied nations, fondly recall the music and dance orchestras of their youth. As Ria Crombach wrote to the editor of *Aachener Nachrichten* during the Kreuder controversy in 2005, “people of the Jewish faith and of course we [non-Jewish] Germans as well owned not only Peter Kreuder records, but also those of Paul Abraham and the Teddy Stauffer Orchestra, who played the swing sound.... Should all artists of that time period be condemned after the fact for helping people bear desolation?”¹¹⁴ Crombach’s letter, generally representative of the surviving war generation’s attitude toward Third Reich entertainment musicians, conspicuously confirms that artists such as Kreuder indeed helped an afflicted German population find solace during the war. But as Crombach’s letter also suggests, the era’s sentimental entertainment music and jazzy, swing-tempered tunes rained upon the just and the unjust alike.

In suggesting that German resistance power was bolstered during the Second World War through the consumption of “light entertainment fare,” Wicke and Kottmann surely do not refer to those German Jews who found distraction and enjoyment in *Schlager* music during the 1930s, before their subsequent deportation and murder. But if Third Reich entertainment music—mindless and apolitical as it was—is argued to have so effectively assisted “Germans” in tolerating the tribulations of daily life under National Socialism, how could it have failed to achieve the same for those fellow Germans who found themselves persecuted?

The assertion that breezy, light entertainment music strengthened *anyone’s* “resisting power” is dubious at best, as none of the scholars cited in this essay have attempted to document it. Just how effective was *Schlager* in buttressing the regime? Were Reich citizens more apt to stoically resist the Allies and stand by the National Socialist dictatorship with cheerful lyrics such as “komm, spiel mit mir Blindkuh / das ist keine Sünde, du” (“come play blind man’s bluff with me / that’s not a sin, you!”) ringing in their ears?¹¹⁵ What was the morally preferable alternative to composing and playing light entertainment music in the Third Reich? It should not be sur-

prising that the answers to these questions are not provided by either Kottmann or Wicke, given that they fail to pose the elementary question: what should these musicians have done, then? Instead, these scholars engage in painstaking and detailed research, render well-articulated analysis, deliver gratifyingly harsh, moralistic critiques, and all the while avoid that most frustratingly pedestrian of questions: should musicians like Kreuder have emigrated, even though they were not personally persecuted?

The historiographic richness and complexity of the lives of Third Reich musicians is lost when they are dismissed out of hand in favor of those who are considered worthier, or given a free pass altogether because they were banned at one time or later confessed to having been “opportunistic.” In privileging or accepting the supposed “just” over the “unjust” one unnecessarily simplifies the atmosphere of the Third Reich. How, then, should scholars evaluate the careers of musicians who remained in National Socialist Germany and who enjoyed relatively undisturbed lives while the regime harassed, imprisoned, deported, and mass-murdered others? The mayor of Aachen had it right: “very carefully.”¹¹⁶ In this context, “very carefully” should perhaps denote an approach that does not pass moral judgment on an historical subject before proceeding with an analysis. It appears more intellectually fruitful to embrace the intense moral ambiguity inherent in the lives of these individuals, attempt to clarify this ambiguity in a historical context, and let the proverbial chips fall where they may.

Notes

¹ See, for example, Albert Mensah, *When the Drumbeat Changes, Dance a Different Dance: How to Be an Opportunist in Today's Changing World* (Lake Placid, NY: Aviva, 2000), or Ronald L. Krannich and Caryl Rae, *The Job Hunting Guide: Transitioning from College to Career* (Manassas Park, VA: Impact Publications, 2003), which includes the subchapter “Be an opportunist, find a company that's right for you.”

² *Unterhaltungsmusik* (entertainment music), or *U-Musik*, which is interchangeable with *leichte Unterhaltungsmusik* (light entertainment music), covers many genres, ranging from musicals and operettas to chansons and *Schlagers*. While the term *Schlager* can be defined as a popular song, *Schlagermusik* of the 1930s and 1940s primarily consisted of danceable tangos, foxtrots, and waltzes that had a fixed beat and were not improvisatory. Wolfgang Kowalewski, interview by author, January 15, 2006; Andreas Ballstaedt, “Unterhaltungsmusik,” *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik*, vol. 9, ed. Ludwig Finscher (Stuttgart: Bärenreiter/Metzler, 1998), 1186–99. I am indebted to Mr. Kowalewski of Westdeutscher Rundfunk Köln, WDR 4, for sharing his expertise in German *Schlager* and for providing access to Peter Kreuder shellac records.

³ Michael Kater notes that Kreuder was legendary for “his greed for worldly possessions, his callousness against fellow musicians, and his craving for attention of any kind”; Michael Kater, *Different Drummers: Jazz in the Culture of Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 188. The post-war assessment of Kreuder made by his contemporaries, who gave him such nicknames as “Peter Muenchhausen,” “Reich Storyteller,” and “Lying Peter,” ranges from friendly amusement to open hostility. See Géza von Cziffra, *Kauf dir einen bunten Luftballon* (Munich: Herbig, 1975), 148–49; Hans Borgelt, *Grethe Weiser: Herz mit Schnauze* (Munich: Schneekluth, 1983), 247; and Max Colpet, *Sag mir wo die Jahre sind* (Munich: Langen Müller, 1975), 80–81.

⁴ *Random House Webster's College Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (New York: Random House, 1999), s.v. “Opportunism.”

⁵ Michael Kater, *The Twisted Muse: Musicians and Their Music in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Joseph Wulf, *Musik im Dritten Reich: Eine Dokumentation* (Gütersloh: Sigbert Mohn, 1963); Erik Levi, *Music in the Third Reich* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Michael Meyer, *The Politics of Music in the Third Reich* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 338, 340.

⁶ Fred Prieberg, *Musik im NS-Staat* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1982).

⁷ See, for instance, Kater, *Different Drummers*, 21, 53, 98–99, 143, 186.

⁸ Michael Kater, “The Enigmatic Opportunist,” in *Composers of the Nazi Era: Eight Portraits* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3–30.

⁹ Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, 7–14.

¹⁰ Kater, *Different Drummers*, 42, 64, 99.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, 99.

¹⁴ *Random House Webster's College Dictionary* (1999), s.v. “Opportunism.”

¹⁵ Volker Kühn, “Kreuder, Peter (Paul),” *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik*, vol. 10, ed. Ludwig Finscher (Stuttgart: Bärenreiter/Metzler, 2003), 692.

¹⁶ Kreuder arranged Hollaender's music for the Josef von Sternberg film *The Blue Angel* (1930).

¹⁷ The term “Evergreen” can be defined as a “*Schlager*, or catchy melody which remains popular for an extended time and is repeatedly played”; *Duden Deutsches Universalwörterbuch*, 3rd ed. (Mannheim: Dudenverlag, 1996), s.v. “Evergreen.”

¹⁸ Ludowica von Berswordt, ed., *Peter Kreuder Werkverzeichnis* (Berlin: Offsetdruckerei Ch. Schmidt oHG, 1985), 16–40; Rainer Lotz, *Discographie der deutschen Tanzmusik*, Band 3 (Bonn: Birgit Lotz Verlag, 1994), 704–39.

¹⁹ Kühn, “Kreuder, Peter (Paul),” 694.

²⁰ See the Peter Kreuder obituaries: “Ein Komponist für Millionen,” *Fränkischer Anzeiger*, June 29, 1981; Michael Kück, “Der Komponist mit der goldenen Nase: Zum Tode von Peter Kreuder,” *Peiner Allgemeine Zeitung*, July 1, 1981; “Zum Tode von Peter Kreuder – Was wäre der Film ohne ihn?” *Hamburger Abendblatt*, June 29, 1981; and Bernd Lubowski, “Ein großes Kind der leichten Muse,” *Hamburger Abendblatt*, June 29, 1981.

²¹ Ingrid Kreuder, letter to Aachen Mayor Dr. Jürgen Linden, November 10, 2004. I would like to thank Mrs. Kreuder for sharing correspondence concerning the controversy in Aachen, providing personal documentation from the Peter Kreuder estate, and for considerably easing my access to a wide range of Peter Kreuder's music.

²² “Die aufgeworfenen Fragen bedürfen jedenfalls einer sehr sorgfältigen Recherche und Abwägung.” Dietmar Kottmann, letter to Ingrid Kreuder on behalf of

mayor of Aachen, December 15, 2004. I am very grateful to Mr. Kottmann for kindly sharing his official Aachen correspondence and research findings with me.

²³ The historian and geography professor Max Eckert-Greifendorff (1868–1938) and city archive director Albert Huyskens (1879–1956) were revealed in 2005 to be enthusiastic supporters of the National Socialist regime. As a result, Aachen’s “Huyskensweg” was renamed “Blumenthalstrasse” in 2006; “Eckertweg” remains.

²⁴ Hans Schwerte, professor of German literature and onetime rector of the university, was exposed as former SS captain Hans Ernst Schneider (1909–1999); Bernd Müllender, “Verschwiegene Denkkartelle,” *die tageszeitung (taz NRW)*, March 5, 2005.

²⁵ Stadt Aachen Presse- und Informationsbüro, *Public Notice Announcing 3 November 2005 Dietmar Kottmann Presentation “Peter Kreuder in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus. Schön fär̈b’ ich die Zeit,”* October 10, 2005.

²⁶ Gerald Eimer, “Der ‘König der Evergreens’ war doch ziemlich braun,” *Aachener Nachrichten* (Stadt), May 14, 2005.

²⁷ Dietmar Kottmann, Report to the mayor of Aachen after inquiry in German Federal Archive, April 2, 2005.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ W. Schütte, *Regionalität und Föderalismus im Rundfunk. Die geschichtliche Entwicklung in Deutschland 1923–1945* (Frankfurt/Main: Josef Knecht, 1971), 189; quoted in Peter Wicke, “Das Ende: Populäre Musik im faschistischen Deutschland,” in *Ich will aber gerade vom Leben singen...: Über populäre Musik vom ausgehenden 19. Jahrhundert bis zum Ende der Weimarer Republik*, trans. Richard Deveson, ed. Sabine Schutte (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1987), 427.

³¹ Stadt Aachen, *Public Notice*.

³² See Wicke, “Das Ende,” 418–29.

³³ G. Eckert, *Der Rundfunk als Führungsmittel* (Heidelberg: n.p., 1941); quoted in Wicke, “Das Ende,” 424. The music referred to is the light-hearted and popular *Schlagermusik* described in n. 2.

³⁴ “Ungebrochen lief so über den 30. Januar 1933 hinweg eine Tradition der deutschen Tanz- und Unterhaltungsmusikproduktion weiter, die mit ihren rührselig-romantischen Wort-Ton-Klischees schon zu Zeiten der Weimarer Republik in keiner Weise auf gesellschaftliche Wirklichkeit reagiert hatte, sie vielmehr im Nonsens der Schlagerlyrik zum schönen Schein privater Gefühlseligkeit verdünnte.” Wicke, “Das Ende,” 424.

³⁵ Kottmann, Report to the mayor of Aachen.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Wicke briefly discusses Kreuder in “Das Ende,” 422.

³⁸ “Es ist eine Art von *stählerner Romantik*, die das deutsche Leben wieder lebenswert gemacht hat, eine Romantik, die sich nicht vor der Härte des Daseins versteckt oder ihr in blauen Fernen zu entrinnen trachtet, eine Romantik, die den Mut hat, den Problemen gegenüberzutreten und ihnen fest und ohne Zucken in die mitleidlosen Augen zu schauen.” *Ibid.*, 420.

³⁹ Stadt Aachen, *Public Notice*.

⁴⁰ Kühn, “Kreuder, Peter (Paul),” 692–95.

⁴¹ Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, 8.

⁴² Kater, *Different Drummers*, 20.

⁴³ See *Meldungen aus dem Reich 1938–1945: Die geheimen Lageberichte des Sicherheitsdienstes der SS*, ed. Heinz Boberach (Herrsching: Pawlak, 1984), vol. 11: 4333, and vol. 16: 6196. Kreuder’s name appears twice, relating to complaints from the public about the jazz style of his music. Kater refers to Kreuder as a jazz pianist

and a “jazzman” with “superb jazz qualities”; Kater, *Different Drummers*, 185, 188. Lutz Felbick of the Robert Schumann Hochschule in Düsseldorf finds that the Peter Kreuder Orchestra recordings “Chasing Shadows” (1935) and “Weekend” (1938) on the CD entitled *Peter Kreuder und sein Tanz- und Sinfonie-Orchester* (CD No. 222396-203) “differentiate [themselves] stylistically in no way from the ‘feared’ jazz orchestras of the Afro-American swing era”; Lutz Felbick, e-mail message to author, December 14, 2005. Erik Levi writes that Kreuder’s cover of Duke Ellington’s “Caravan” (1937) “was in fact genuine Black American dance music”; Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, 121. The Viennese *Welt am Abend* reported that American experts named Kreuder “third-best jazz band leader in the world”; *Welt am Abend* [Vienna], February 14, 1947.

⁴⁴ “Ein Jazz-Rummel in München,” *Völkischer Beobachter* [Munich], March 4, 1932.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Peter Kreuder, *Nur Puppen haben keine Tränen* (Munich: Percha, 1971; reprint, Munich: Dtv, 2003), 215–16. This autobiography and Kreuder’s earlier memoir—*Schön war die Zeit* (Munich: Kindler, 1955)—are considered highly anecdotal and are therefore not cited in this essay as historical sources.

⁴⁷ Bundesarchiv (German Federal Archives, henceforth identified as “BA”), Berlin-Lichterfelde, Germany. Peter Kreuder NSDAP Membership Card, No. 1275600. Membership date listed as August 1, 1932. My research at the BA lasted from October 2005 to March 2006. Files consulted in my research include: RKK-KP 4010-01/41-19; RK N22 (Bildnr. 1609-64); R/55 Sign. 000126 (Blätter 196-300). The BA file R/109 I Sign. 2713 quoted below was located by Dietmar Kottmann.

⁴⁸ “Neue Untersuchung rät von einer Ehrung Peter Kreuders ab: Der in Aachen geborene Komponist stand den Nazi-Größen nahe.”; “Er [Kreuder] pflegte wohl auch gute Kontakte zu Hitler, der eine umfangreiche Plattensammlung von Kreuder besaß.” Eimer, “Der ‘König der Evergreens’ war doch ziemlich braun.” The latter, which claims that Hitler possessed a large collection of Kreuder records and was thus positively inclined toward the composer, has remained entirely unsubstantiated and has not been argued in any scholarly work, including that of Kottmann.

⁴⁹ In 2007, Kottmann published the essay “Peter Kreuder: Die Jahre 1932 bis 1945 im Lichte seiner Autobiographien sowie der Bestände des Bundesarchivs und des Bayerischen Hauptstaatsarchivs,” in *Zeitschrift des Aachener Geschichtsvereins*, Band 109 (Aachen: Aachener Geschichtsverein, 2007), which he kindly made available to me. This essay makes mention of the early termination of Kreuder’s party membership: “Apparently Kreuder did not demonstratively leave the party in 1934, but was merely erased from the Munich/Oberbayern gau membership list due to a revision. Maybe this happened because he rarely stayed in Munich anymore at that point, and did not pay dues. At any rate, Kreuder’s later success and activity in Munich cannot be understood if one interprets this entry [in Kreuder’s NSDAP file] as a demonstrative turn away from the NSDAP”; “Anscheinend ist Kreuder 1934 aber nicht demonstrativ aus der Partei ausgetreten, sondern wurde lediglich vom Gau München/Oberbayern aufgrund einer Revision in der Mitgliederliste gelöscht. Vielleicht geschah das, weil er sich kaum noch in München aufhielt und keine Beiträge entrichtete. Jedenfalls ist Kreuders späterer Erfolg und seine Tätigkeit in München nicht zu verstehen, wenn man diesen Eintrag als demonstrative Abkehr von der NSDAP verstehen würde,” (282). The brevity of this speculative and somewhat dismissive analysis of the early termination of Kreuder’s membership differs sharply from the detailed, public focus Kreuder’s NSDAP membership received in 2005 in Eimer’s aforementioned article “Der ‘König der Evergreens’ war doch ziemlich braun,” which was based upon Kottmann’s findings.

⁵⁰ BA, RK N22 Bildnr. 1614.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* The latest film music by Kreuder is from the film *Es fing so harmlos an*, which premiered October 20, 1944.

⁵² Kreuder's claim to have been a musical assistant for Krenek's opera at the Munich Gärtnerplatz Theatre, most likely performed in 1926, could not be corroborated. Kreuder lived near Munich at the time, and it is possible that his presumably insignificant role as assistant failed to find its way into historical records. Katja Leitz, Staatstheater am Gärtnerplatz, e-mail message to author, December 19, 2005.

⁵³ Richard Hamilton, *Who Voted for Hitler?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 476.

⁵⁴ Though Kottmann's essay "Peter Kreuder: Die Jahre 1932 bis 1945 im Lichte seiner Autobiographien" specifically focuses upon the composer's autobiographies, the *Völkischer Beobachter's* documented condemnation of Kreuder's 1932 Odeon jazz concert is not addressed.

⁵⁵ Kreuder's NSDAP card records the membership as having been terminated [*gestrichen*]. Considering that Kreuder's membership termination is not marked under the printed rubric as *ausgetreten* [actively resigned], but handwritten on the membership form as *gestrichen*, the most credible explanation for Kreuder's departure from the Nazi party is that he continuously failed or refused to pay his membership dues, resulting in his name being unceremoniously struck from the membership roll.

⁵⁶ Martin Stöcker, "Das Stahltier," <http://hometown.aol.de/Nocircde/StahlTier.html> (accessed November 12, 2005); *Peter Kreuder Werkverzeichnis*, 19.

⁵⁷ See Albrecht Dümling and Peter Girth, eds., *Entartete Musik: Zur Düsseldorfer Ausstellung von 1938. Eine kommentierte Rekonstruktion* (Düsseldorf: n.p., 1988), X.

⁵⁸ Axel Jockwer, "Unterhaltungsmusik im Dritten Reich" (Ph.D. diss., Universität Konstanz, 2004), 206.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Kottmann, Report to the mayor of Aachen.

⁶¹ BA, RKK-KP 4010-01/41-19.

⁶² "Zweite Liste unerwünschter musikalischer Werke," *Beilage zu den Amtlichen Mitteilungen der Reichsmusikkammer*, April 15, 1940.

⁶³ "Die Akten des Reichspropagandaministeriums und der UFA belegen dagegen, dass er sich gerade in den letzten Kriegsjahren bereitwillig Goebbels dienstbar machte und die die Kampfmoral der Soldaten unterstützende und für die psychologische Stabilisierung der "Heimatfront" hilfreiche leichte Unterhaltungskost lieferte, die die Menschen von den Schrecken des Kriegsalltags ablenken sollte." Stadt Aachen, *Public Notice*.

⁶⁴ This directive, the *Anordnung zum Schutze musikalischen Kulturgutes* from March 29, 1939, gave rise to the *Reichsmusikprüfstelle's* four lists of undesirable musical works beginning on September 1, 1939.

⁶⁵ "Auf Grund des § 25 der Ersten Verordnung zur Durchführung des Reichskulturkammergesetzes vom 1. November 1933 (RGBl. I S. 797ff.) erlasse ich zum Schutze des Kulturlebens des deutschen Volkes gegen die Einflüsse unerwünschter und schädlicher Musik folgende Anordnung." "Zweite Liste unerwünschter musikalischer Werke."

⁶⁶ Jockwer notes that RKK director Hans Hinkel chaired a 1942 meeting, which was called to address the lagging participation of entertainment stars in official events created for the public. The minutes to the meeting reveal that the decision for a Kreuder radio ban had been duly recorded. For reasons unknown, the typewritten text was subsequently crossed out by hand. Jockwer, "Unterhaltungsmusik im Dritten Reich," 514–15.

⁶⁷ Scholars who have made this claim include Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, 17; Prieberg, *Musik im NS-Staat*, 175–76; Alan Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, & Economics in Nazi Germany: The Reich Chambers of Music, Theater, and the Visual Arts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 44–45; Wicke, "Das Ende," 420; Wulf, *Musik im Dritten Reich*, 370.

⁶⁸ Prieberg, *Musik im NS-Staat*, 179–80.

⁶⁹ For an example of an RMK questionnaire see Wulf, *Musik im Dritten Reich*, 370–73.

⁷⁰ Prieberg, *Musik im NS-Staat*, 180.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁷² These can be found in Peter Kreuder's RKK file: BA, RK N22 Bildnr. 1609–64.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, Bildnr. 1636.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Bildnr. 1658.

⁷⁵ The first reminder to Kreuder, dated November 2, 1937, corresponds to Bildnr. 1654 of RKK file BA, RK N22: "Hierdurch erinnere ich Sie nochmals an die Erledigung meines Schreibens vom 13.9.ds.Js. und bitte Sie, nunmehr bis zum 6.ds.Mts. in unserer Geschäftsstelle Friedrichstrasse 24 – Ausweisabteilung – vorzusprechen. Dieses Schreiben ist mitzubringen und vorzulegen." The second reminder, Bildnr. 1656, states: "Hierdurch ersuche ich Sie letztmalig innerhalb drei Tagen bis zum Sonnabend, dem 13.d.Mts. in unserer Geschäftsstelle Berlin SW.68, Friedrichstrasse 24/I – Ausweisabteilung – vorzusprechen."

⁷⁶ BA, RK N22 Bildnr. 1654, 1656, 1650, respectively.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, Bildnr. 1642.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Bildnr. 1652.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, Bildnr. 1648.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Bildnr. 1646, 1644. These notices are dated January 31, 1938, and May 12, 1938, respectively.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Bildnr. 1640.

⁸² *Ibid.*, Bildnr. 1634.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, Bildnr. 1632.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Bildnr. 1662.

⁸⁵ Kottmann, "Peter Kreuder: Die Jahre 1932," 282.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 283. The unpaginated file that documents this compliance (Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Signatur MK 60331, "Peter Kreuder – Gärtnerplatztheater") was made available to me by Mr. Kottmann.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ BA, RK N22 Bildnr. 1609–64.

⁸⁹ Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Signatur MK 60331, Aktenzeichen N0 a 1536, dated September 12, 1938.

⁹⁰ BA, RK N22 Bildnr. 1616.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* Records show that Kreuder paid 60 Reich Marks (RM) in April 1944, although he owed a total of 540 RM in unpaid dues.

⁹² See, for example, Jockwer, who calls this claim "extremely unlikely"; Jockwer, "Unterhaltungsmusik im Dritten Reich," 206.

⁹³ BA, R55/Sign. 000126, Blätter 194–97.

⁹⁴ See Kottmann, e-mail message to Munich City Archives, April 27, 2005.

⁹⁵ BA, R/55 Sign. 000126, Blatt 263.

⁹⁶ Kottmann, Report to the mayor of Aachen.

⁹⁷ Kreuder claims this in *Schön war die Zeit*, 205, and *Nur Puppen haben keine Tränen*, 294–96. There is a verifiable personal link between Kreuder and Adolf Wagner, as the latter wrote the text to Kreuder's *Liebe Trommeln und Fanfaren* and both lived in Munich during the period in question.

⁹⁸ This interpretation of events was strongly promoted by Peter Kreuder himself. No formal evidence of a political exile has been produced, however. The alleged “confirmation of refugee status” (“Flyttningsbetyg inom Sverige”) that is a part of Kreuder’s estate and viewable at the Potsdam Filmmuseum website at <http://www.filmmuseum-potsdam.de/html/de/480-2452.htm> is actually a Swedish change of residence registration document. The form apparently was never submitted to the authorities, as the destination address (lines three and four) are not filled out. Further evidence that Kreuder was not living in political exile in Sweden include a concert program from the Berlin Scala theater dated February 1940. This program lists “Peter Kreuder and his Orchestra” as the top billing, and contains numerous pictures of Kreuder as well as a short biographical piece; Potsdam Filmmuseum, Peter Kreuder estate, research conducted under supervision of Birgit Scholz, January 2006. In addition, the RMK inspector report concerning the events of February 12, 1940, discussed above refers to the same Berlin Scala concert, thus providing independent confirmation of Kreuder’s presence in Germany in February 1940.

⁹⁹ “Peter Kreuder hat mehrfach versucht, ins Reich zurückzukehren. Wie Ihnen sicherlich bekannt ist, ist er unter Vertragsbruch und Hinterlassung von Steuerschulden seinerzeit nach Schweden gereist.” BA. R/109 I Sign. 2713, Blatt 250.

¹⁰⁰ “Diese von Herrn Peter Kreuder geborgten Beträge, die bis heute noch nicht zurückgezahlt sind, sind von ihm verbraucht worden, und außerdem soll er noch weitere Schulden hinterlassen haben. Die Lebensführung des Herrn Peter Kreuder ist dann auch Gegenstand unliebsame Erörterungen in der dänischen Presse gewesen.” *Ibid.*, Blatt 254; BA R/55 Sign. 000126, Blätter 196–300.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, Blatt 250.

¹⁰² “Auch Kreuders Einwendungen, er sei durch anderweitige Verpflichtungen an der Nachholung von Konzerten gehindert gewesen, halte ich bei dieser Sachlage in Bezug auf die Rheinland-Konzerte für Ausreden und für einen Mangel an gutem Willen, ohne dass es einer Nachprüfung im Einzelnen, die umfangreiche Erhebungen erforderlich machen würden, bedürfte.” *Ibid.*, Blätter 252–53.

¹⁰³ “Kreuder hieraus sprechende Gesinnung und Haltung steht im Widerspruch zu der Anordnung der Präsidenten der Einzelkammern der Reichskulturkammer vom 10. März 1943, in der von den Kammermitgliedern verlangt wird, dass sie sich der Achtung des Ansehens für Kulturschaffende würdig zu erweisen und alles zu unterlassen haben, was der deutschen Volksgemeinschaft, Kultur und Wirtschaft abträglich ist. Gegen Kreuder könnte daher die von der Reichskulturkammer vorgeschlagene Ordnungsstrafe festgesetzt werden.” *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ “Ich halte eine Dienstverpflichtung aber noch für zweckmäßiger, als Kreuder zur Wehrmacht freizugeben, weil er in diesem Falle sicherlich nicht an die Front kommen, sondern in irgendeinem Casino als Klavierspieler fest gehalten würde.” *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ “Nach dem Schreiben der Botschaft erscheint es mir unerwünscht, daß Kreuder als Repräsentant der Deutschen Kunst im Ausland aufkreuzt.” *Ibid.*, Blatt 253.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, Blatt 254.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, Blatt 250.

¹⁰⁸ “Um einen weiteren Bericht über K r e u d e r ist Ministerialdirektor Hinkel als Generalsekretär der Reichskulturkammer unmittelbar von dem Herrn Minister ersucht worden. Da die Personalableitung an der weiteren Verfolgung der Angelegenheit K r e u d e r nicht entscheidend interessiert ist, braucht die Angelegenheit in der Personalableitung vorläufig nicht weiterverfolgt zu werden.” BA R/55 Sign. 000126, Blatt 263.

¹⁰⁹ BA. RK N22 Bildnr. 1660. The number in the title is sometimes listed as 75, as in the case of Albrecht Dümmling’s exhibition program *Original-Tondokumente zur Ausstellung ‘Entartete Musik’ Düsseldorf 1988* (Düsseldorf: n.p., 1988), 6.

¹¹⁰ “Ich wollt’, ich wär’ ein Huhn.” Music: Peter Kreuder. Text: Hans-Fritz Beckmann. © 1936 by Ufaton-Verlagsgesellschaft mbH (BMG Music Publishing Germany), München.

¹¹¹ “Liegt dieser Humor unserem Volkscharakter nicht – weder dem Hörer noch dem Komponisten, so ist jedes Bemühen, ihn dennoch krampfhaft hervorzuzaubern, ein V e r s u c h a m u n t a u g l i c h e n Objekt, das eines Tages und gewaltsam gestoppt werden könnte.” “Ich wollt’, ich wär’ ein Huhn...,” *Das schwarze Korps* [Berlin], November 26, 1936.

¹¹² “Willi Stanke Orchester” and “Stanke, Willi,” Pumpkin Pie Records, <http://www.ppr-berlin.de/index.html?cds/tiger.html&1> (accessed December 1, 2005). Currently offline. See also Jens-Uwe Volmecke, “Willi Stanke und sein Orchester,” liner notes for *Die goldene Ära Deutscher Tanzorchester*, JUBE-Musikproduktion, 1999, CD 013992.

¹¹³ *Swing Tanzen Verboten!: Swing Music and Nazi-Propaganda Swing During World War II*, Proper Records, 2003, CD.

¹¹⁴ “Aber nicht nur Hitler, auch die Menschen jüdischen Glaubens und selbstverständlich auch wir besaßen nicht nur Peter-Kreuder-Platten, sondern auch solche von Paul Abraham und dem Teddy-Stauffer-Orchester, die den Swingsound spielten oder in die Operetten einbrachten. Sollen nachträglich sämtliche Kunstschaaffenden der damaligen Zeit stellvertretend verurteilt werden, die den Menschen halfen, die Trostlosigkeit zu ertragen?” Ria Crombach, “In anderen Städten wird er geehrt,” *Aachener Nachrichten* (Stadt), May 20, 2005. Paul Abraham (1892–1960) was a Hungarian-born Jewish light entertainment composer who was popular in Germany during the Weimar Republic. Teddy Stauffer (1909–1991) was a popular Swiss bandleader in Germany in the 1930s, known for his jazz-oriented swing music.

¹¹⁵ “Blindekuh.” Music: Peter Kreuder. Text: Hans-Fritz Beckmann. © 1936 by Edition Meisel GmbH Berlin.

¹¹⁶ Kottmann, “Response to Ingrid Kreuder on Behalf of Mayor of Aachen.”