THE ANCIENT LAW
Das Alte Gesetz

ESSAYS BY
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AND
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WITH NOTES ON THE MUSICAL SCORES BY
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AND
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Anti-Semitism and Assimilation in

Das Alte Gesetz
(1923)

Cynthia Walk
(University of California, San Diego)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The First World War and its aftermath saw an increase in the mass migration of East European Jews to the cities of the West, fleeing the chaos caused by the Russian Revolution and the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Mostly Orthodox Jews with distinctive dress, beliefs, and customs, they became a visible foreign presence on the streets of Western Europe. Released in 1923 and fully restored in this edition, Das alte Gesetz (The Ancient Law), by director Ewald André Dupont, reenacts an earlier migration of Jews from Eastern Europe to the capital of the Austrian Empire in the 1860s through the journey of Baruch Mayer, an Orthodox Jew and aspiring actor, from a shtetl in Galicia to the stage of Vienna’s preeminent theater, the Burgtheater.
Together with four other feature films made in Germany and Austria between 1919 and 1924 by directors concerned about the plight of the Jews in postwar Europe — *Der Ritualmord* (Ritual Murder, directed by Joseph Delmont, 1919), *Der Golem, wie er in die Welt kam* (The Golem, how he came into the world, directed by Paul Wegener, 1920), *Die Gezeichneten* (The Stigmatized/aka Love one another, directed by Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1922), and *Die Stadt ohne Juden* (The City without Jews, directed by Hans Karl Breslauer, 1924) — as a group these films represent cinematic interventions in an ongoing German debate about *die Judenfrage*, the Jewish question, during a period of escalating racial anti-Semitism that fomented xenophobia about immigration and fear of miscegenation.

In the chaotic climate following the collapse of both the German and the Austro-Hungarian empires, immigrant *Ostjuden*, as they were called, became a target of anti-Semitic rhetoric from politicians throughout Germany and Austria. While the Jewish communities in Berlin and Vienna increased overall between 1910 and 1925, Eastern Jews comprised little more than 1 percent of either city’s population. Despite their relatively modest presence, the immigration of Eastern Jews provoked the disproportionate and exaggerated perception that they were a serious civic problem, described as a drain on municipal resources and an invasion of foreigners whose different physiognomy, religion, and culture resisted acculturation. The reaction against *Ostjuden* quickly escalated from demagoguery to political agitation and government-sponsored legislation, such as a November 1919 Berlin edict authorizing the expulsion of any Eastern Jews who had committed a crime.
Against this background *Der Ritualmord* (1919) was marketed as an “enlightenment film” (*Aufklärungsfilm*) to educate the public about anti-Semitic propaganda, in this case to dispel the myth of blood libel, the sensationalized claim that Jews engage in human sacrifice. Though the film is considered lost, its plot can be reconstructed from contemporary reviews. Set in a rural village in Tsarist Russia where Jews and Gentiles live among one another in a peasant culture, the events feature a pogrom, showing violence done to innocent Jewish villagers over unfounded rumors that they practice ritual murder. A young Russian student steps in to rescue the head of the Jewish community from being stoned to death by an angry mob and falls in love with his daughter. Social harmony is restored through the intervention of an exemplary Gentile, whose enlightened engagement across ethnic boundaries includes a rudimentary romance.

Also set in Tsarist Russia like *Der Ritualmord*, but now in the lead-up to the 1905 revolution, *Die Gezeichneten* (1922) exposed Russian government collusion in anti-Semitic propaganda as a strategy to undercut the revolutionary movement and deflect popular discontent onto the Jews. A deliberately orchestrated campaign by the chief of police with an *agent provocateur* who spreads false rumors throughout the countryside culminates in a terrifying pogrom. At the center of the plot, Hanne-Liebe is rescued from rape in the last minute by Sasha, her Russian lover. The mixed couple here exemplifies the wishful solution advocated by the film in its alternative title, Love one another.

From a different vantage point, *Der Golem* (1920) presented an adaptation of the mythical narrative set in sixteenth-century Prague about a giant warrior sculpted out of clay, called into being by the Rabbi of the Jewish ghetto to protect his people from the emperor’s decree of banishment from the realm. The inhabitants of the ghetto city, visually modeled after *Ostjuden*, are characterized as unruly and dangerous and a threat to the stability of the German Empire through recursive crowd scenes with dark figures swarming the streets. The subplot concerns a secret affair between the Rabbi’s daughter Miriam and a Gentile messenger Florian, who delivers the edict from the imperial court. Miriam embodies the anti-Semitic stereotype of *die schöne Jüdin*, the beautiful but lethal seductress. Her alluring gaze — in a female version of the more common trope of the male Jew as sexual predator — entices Florian into an illicit relationship, which ends badly when a jealous rival in the Rabbi’s house discovers them in her bedroom and rouses the Golem to violence, killing Florian and setting a fire that nearly destroys the ghetto city. *Der Golem* represents an assimilation narrative with boundaries defined by racial anti-Semitism, promoting the fear that miscegenation leads to catastrophe. The impossibility of the mixed couple in *Der Golem* presents a view that assimilation beyond separate social coexistence will not be tolerated by either side. Although the emperor withdraws his banishment decree, the final shot of the film emphasizes the segregation of the Jewish community within the host country behind the massive closed gates of the ghetto.
Moving the mixed couple scenario from the medieval East to the Enlightenment West of the mid-nineteenth century, Dupont’s Das alte Gesetz resets the boundaries of assimilation for the Weimar film audience by engaging two central issues from different perspectives. On the one hand are Gentile German (respectively, Austrian) anxieties over ethnic difference and Jewish otherness in light of the influx of refugees from Eastern Europe — anti-Semitism. On the other hand are Orthodox and Zionist Jewish anxieties over the loss of tradition and community in the modern, urban, secular culture of Western Europe, as well as concerns among acculturated Jews about the destabilizing impact of newcomers on their own status — assimilation. Dupont’s film addresses both issues through a historical plot that resolves them — filmically at least — for both Jewish and non-Jewish spectators through the relationship between the main character, an immigrant from Galicia, and his aristocratic patroness in Vienna.

In this film the director commemorates the journey of his grandparents’ generation from the Eastern borders to the capital of the Austrian Empire in the 1860s, an earlier period known for the mass migration of Jews from the provinces to Vienna, drawn by the promise of economic and social advancement. The historical setting places the film in the context of the legal emancipation of Jews in the German-speaking countries, where they achieved full civil status between 1862 and 1874 when a civil law permitted mixed marriage. In this context the sympathetic support of Baruch’s patroness, played by the actress Henny Porten, one of Germany’s first national film stars with iconic status, helped to validate the philosemitic tendency of this film for contemporaries.
Nevertheless, for the Gentile audience with a protective view of class privilege and social hierarchy, while casual affairs might be tolerated, the archduchess’s repeated advances toward Baruch could provoke concerns about more serious romantic involvement between aristocrats and commoners. In Baruch’s four private audiences with her, the archduchess Elizabeth asks him each time to make a wish, hoping to be reciprocated as the object of his desire. Following his successful premiere in the role of Hamlet — one of many professional opportunities she has facilitated — she invites him to meet her outside in the palace garden. Though the scene is clearly framed as a romantic tryst through the garden-in-the-moonlight setting, the couple remains separated by the shadow of an enormous tree falling between them, a broad dark line down the center of the image here that forms a barrier they do not cross:

Significantly, all initiative for a romantic relationship comes from the archduchess, while Baruch’s body language consistently emphasizes his restrained and deferential posture in a way that counters fears of Jewish subversiveness as well as anti-Semitic sexual clichés of the Jewish male aggressor circulating in right-wing popular culture. The farewell scene signifies mutual acceptance of institutional prohibitions in the pre-emancipation era against disruptive social and sexual boundary crossing. Under pressure at the Hapsburg court to break off the inappropriate relationship, the archduchess explains to Baruch that this must be their last meeting. When the romance succumbs to what is quaintly called “court etiquette,” the threat of an inter-ethnic liaison—representing a misalliance to social conservatives and transgressive miscegenation to racial anti-Semites—is averted.

Fig. 1: Rendezvous scene
Like their Gentile counterparts but for different reasons, Jewish spectators in the Weimar film audience also may be anxious about whether Baruch will succumb to the entreaties of the archduchess. Interfaith romance represents a threat to Jewish identity among Orthodox and Zionist Jews, if it leads to out-marriage. To them the film offers a sympathetic portrait of the shtetl as the home of authentic Urjuden, a corrective to the prevailing negative view of East European Jewry. While Baruch has left the shtetl, he has internalized the rule of endogamy, that “ancient law” of Jewish tradition. Expressing gratitude to archduchess Elisabeth for enabling him to penetrate the hierarchy of the court theater, he nonetheless refuses her advances and remains faithful instead to Esther, his childhood sweetheart from Galicia who eventually joins him in Vienna where they are married. The kiss, withheld from the archduchess in the farewell scene, in due course is bestowed on Esther, consummating the engagement of the endogamous Jewish couple in a full embrace, framed within an oval mask as a tableau shot:

![Betrothal scene](image)

Beyond the limits of social assimilation demarcated by the prohibition and disruption of the mixed couple, Das alte Gesetz offers a model for the successful cultural integration of immigrant Ostjuden, here through the performing arts as a promising venue for talented and ambitious young artists. Ernst Deutsch as Baruch recuperates his own biography in the central role of the professional actor, who can be seen as a representative figure for many assimilated Jews in Weimar theater and film. The embedded stage productions in the film all involve non-Jewish characters in the classical repertory of high-culture Western theater (Romeo, Hamlet, Don Carlos). In this respect Baruch’s career reproduces the path of pre-emancipation Jews in Germany and Austria who embraced Bildung, the ideal of...
learning, as a vehicle of social mobility and condition of entry to the bourgeoisie. Yet in Das alte Gesetz cultural assimilation has its limits too. In a scene that challenges the Orthodox migrant from Galicia to redefine his identity in Europe, Baruch Mayer stands in front of a mirror after his successful audition at the Burgtheater:

While he contemplates changes in dress and appearance, retaining his distinctively Jewish name will be a key signifier of the broader but still limited assimilationist agenda in this film. Baruch Mayer: the fictional moniker combines a biblical reference to the Old Testament with a popular surname among Jews in South Germany. The central character in Das alte Gesetz never alters his given or family name, but he does cut off his sidelocks. Large tailor shears in the mirror scene warn of self-mutilation in the impending gesture. However the film forges a compromise that avoids or at least moderates the ominous implications of this act, tantamount to castration and later practiced by Nazi soldiers upon their victims in occupied territories as a sadistic form of Entjudung (de-Judaization). Though Baruch removes these conspicuous public markers of Jewish orthodoxy, he remains observant in private. Later in the film he will commemorate Yom Kippur on the opening night of Hamlet, reading ritual prayers in his backstage dressing room before going onstage for the performance with the prayer book under his costume. Thus Baruch symbolically reconciles religious observance with the demands of his secular career. Das alte Gesetz stops short of full integration in its qualified view of assimilation, promoting acculturation within limits that preserve Jewish distinctiveness and loyalty to religious heritage, avoiding apostasy and betrayal.
Contemporary reviews of the premiere at the Marmorhaus theater in Berlin on 29 October 1923 indicate that *Das alte Gesetz* was well received. One reviewer acknowledged its finesse with tricky subject matter (“die Heikligkeit des Themas”). Another conceded that while the scenario ventured into dangerous territory, it managed to navigate successfully the competing interests of different factions in the audience. However events outside the theater soon showed that Dupont’s film had overplayed the possibilities of assimilation.

Some ten days later, on November 9, the headline of the Zionist newspaper, *Jüdische Rundschau*, somberly proclaimed what it called “the fateful hour of German Jewry” (“Die Schicksalsstunde des deutschen Judentums”), reporting on anti-Semitic agitation and mob violence on a scale unknown in modern Germany up to that time. It noted that as many as ten thousand people had swarmed the streets of Berlin over several days, plundering and looting Jewish businesses, and beating and robbing anyone who looked like a Jew. The background of the Berlin pogrom was the government’s sudden and unexplained decision to rescind the distribution of relief money at the height of postwar hyperinflation, with increasing unemployment and rising prices (on 5 November 1923, a loaf of bread cost 78 billion marks). Right-wing agitators seized the opportunity to spread the rumor that speculators had taken advantage of the situation. As reported, the specific target of the pogrom were the “Galicians” — here a generic code word for all Jewish migrants from Eastern Europe living in Berlin — portrayed as spongers profiting from the hardships of Weimar Germany’s inflation economy. For some (not only Zionist critics who were ideologically opposed to it) the Berlin pogrom along with incidents elsewhere throughout Germany and Austria demonstrated the failure of the politics of assimilation, reigniting the question of whether Jews belonged in these countries at all. To the extent that Eastern Jews became conflated with the general Jewish question, the animus against *Ostjuden* concealed hostility toward Jews at large.

The political initiative to expel the Jews as unwanted inhabitants is taken up after *Der Golem*, once again together with a mixed couple motif, in the 1924 *Die Stadt ohne Juden*. This topical *Zeitfilm* made in Austria addresses the Jewish question along with inflation and unemployment, as a critical issue of the day, by imagining what might happen if an anti-Semitic slogan in contemporary Viennese politics were implemented. “Jews get out!” (“Hinaus mit den Juden!”): what would the consequences be, if the Jews were in fact expelled, not just some and not just segregated in ghettos or internment camps, but all of them actually deported? Though Hans Karl Breslauer’s adaptation of the best-selling satirical novel by Hugo Bettauer fictionalizes the setting with the ironic name Utopia, the film was partly shot on location in Vienna whose politicians also serve as a model for the composite figure
of the chancellor. The film distinguishes between Eastern Jews who live in segregated communities and acculturated Western Jews, who pass as partners in as many as five mixed couple relationships. Among them, it is the triumphant romance between a Jewish man and a Gentile woman that drives the plot and eventually leads to a repeal of the parliamentary law. Leo Strakosch intervenes to claim his prospective bride and ends up saving the entire Jewish community. While the successful intermarriage scenario seems to celebrate a view of Jewish identity that privileges full assimilation, the construction of Eastern Jewish separatism resonates with problematic patterns. The film’s portrayal of how the hero manages to reverse the expulsion law also suggests anti-Semitic clichés about scheming Jews and so compromises a positive view of their assimilation: when the measure to repeal the expulsion law threatens to be short by one vote in parliament, Leo contrives to make an especially recalcitrant anti-Semitic legislator, Councilor Bernart, so drunk that he will miss the voting session.
CONCLUSION

Five early Weimar films between 1919 and 1924 emerged in response to a backlash of racial anti-Semitism against immigrant Ostjuden during the post-World War I era, addressing the vexed topic of assimilation through a mixed couple scenario. While the dynamic of the mixed couple here cuts across gender and ethnicity in a variety of ways, in each case Jewish-Gentile romance initiates a discourse on the boundaries of assimilation with different answers to that question. *Das alte Gesetz* seeks to defuse mutual anxieties around ethnic difference for Jewish minority and dominant Gentile elites in postwar Weimar Germany, by offering a conciliatory Enlightenment model set in mid-nineteenth-century Vienna that allows both groups to maintain their integrity. Social and cultural integration is affirmed, provided there is no compromise to dominant class hierarchy or minority ethnic identity. Here the boundaries of assimilation are symbiotic collaboration short of intermarriage. While the mixed couple plot achieves stability on mutual terms in *Das alte Gesetz*, the other films reveal the enduring power of Gentiles, as the dominant majority in European societies, to dispose and set the limits. In *Der Ritualmord* and *Die Gezeichneten* bare survival of the rural Jewish villagers in Russia in a brutal pogrom depends on the intervention of an educated and romantically engaged Gentile leader. Their vision of tenuous coexistence is amplified in *Der Golem*, where the failure of the mixed couple affirms a policy of ghettoization within the medieval German Empire. By contrast, *Die Stadt ohne Juden* offers an empowering triumph on behalf of the modern urban Jewish community in a Western utopia that is nonetheless illusory. In *Die Stadt ohne Juden* Leo and Lotte may wed, but the flip-flop parliamentary vote empties mixed marriage of any real power to secure the collective status of the Jews, who are more or less only tolerated within the civil order for their usefulness to the economic self-interest of the Gentile majority.

With the exception of *Das alte Gesetz*, underlying anxieties around the Jewish question ultimately remain unresolved in the other four assimilation films, as the specter of government-sponsored anti-Semitic violence looms. Dupont himself retreated to a more pessimistic view of the prospects in a later film near the end of the Weimar era, where the mixed romance formula leads to tragedy and the possibility of any form of assimilation bridging the gulf of ethnic difference seems remote, as its title implies — *Zwei Welten* (*Two Worlds*, 1930).

— Cynthia Walk
The Continuation of a Restoration with Digital Means

Daniel Meiller
(Deutsche Kinemathek)

For E.A. Dupont’s The Ancient Law neither the original camera negative nor any copies of the German version have survived. To close this gap the Deutsche Kinemathek together with the Federal Film Archive created a reconstruction of the German version in 1984. Through an international search four export versions of the film were located in foreign archives: an American, a Swedish, a French and a Russian version. Lothar Schwab, who was entrusted with the reconstruction, compared these sources and produced — on paper — a scrupulous and detailed analysis that resulted in a meticulous plan. Without the censorship card that was not available at the time, the German intertitles could only be gleaned from back translations of the various foreign-language versions. Likewise any conclusions about the sequence of scenes could only be drawn from the available export prints. Consequently this reconstruction represented an approximation of the German release version based on the sources available at the time.

It was not possible to reproduce the color tinting and toning for financial and technical reasons. The copy was black and white. Moreover many nuances of Schwab’s reconstruction plan could not be realized due to the limitations of analog technology. To avoid noticeable jumps in photographic quality, for example, they decided to forego combining different sources in a single shot— such as completing a scene from one shot with missing frames from another one. Nevertheless the 1984 edition has the great merit of a reconstruction that approached the original as closely as possible and made the film available again for the first time.

When the censorship card resurfaced in the 1990s, this discovery invited a critical review of the previous reconstruction. Two decades later this project could finally be realized. Thanks to the initiative of Prof. Cynthia Walk from the University of California, San Diego and to the financial support of the Sunrise Foundation for Education and the Arts, it was possible for the Deutsche Kinemathek in 2017 to rework the previous edition and execute a digital restoration of the film. A renewed international search
produced two more vintage copies. From the archive of the Cinématheque Française an Italian export version of the film was brought in and the Národní Filmovy Archive contributed a hitherto unknown sound version of the film, that was probably made in the early 1930s under the artistic direction of Ernst Deutsch in Prague. The restoration project now had six different sources to work with: five export prints (American, Swedish, French, Russian and Italian versions) and the later sound version.

To develop a restoration concept, in the first phase of the project these sources were subjected to a thorough comparative analysis. The comparison traced content-related, photographic and mechanical aspects. The analysis revealed that the various versions are very different in content. The discrepancies lie in the fact that scenes or single shots were either shortened or deleted altogether. Occasionally variations result from the displacement of scenes or the elimination of parallel montages.

The mechanical condition of the six copies reveals a heterogeneous picture: the range extends from the astonishingly well preserved Swedish copy, over a played out and heavily damaged Russian copy with mechanical defects like vertical lines and scratches, to the Italian copy whose image in many sections is in an advanced state of decay. The damage profile of the individual copies is also very diverse. Thus in the Swedish copy — the first choice because of its photographic quality — scenes treated with particular colors show strong solarisation effects. A disturbing discovery here was the fact that a few scenes that had been included in the 1984 reconstruction in the meantime had become so severely decomposed that they could no longer be used for the current project.

For the conception of the current restoration two important discoveries in the comparative analysis were decisive: on the one hand, the image content of the five different export versions with respect to camera angle and shots used was identical. Since all photographs and records of the film shoot (see bonus feature, The Film in the Film) show only one film camera and apparently no second camera was used to make a so-called export negative, we can assume that the image content of the available

Front and back cover of censorship card for Das Alte Gesetz
foreign versions is identical with the no longer existing German version. On the other hand, all five copies were produced directly from the original camera negative without intermediate printing and therefore display virtually the same photographic quality.

Based on these findings three restoration goals were formulated: the primary goal was the reconstruction of the German premiere version. With the help of the censorship card not only the original wording of the German intertitles could be restored, also the structure and sequence of scenes in the premiere version could be exactly reconstructed. This way, for example, in act one the preparations for the Purim festival and the arrival of Ruben Pick in the shtetl were reconstructed as a parallel montage. A further example is the position of the scene in which Baruch cuts off his sidelocks. In a few versions — and also in the Schwab reconstruction — this scene is shown before Baruch’s audition at the Burgtheater. However the censorship card clearly proves that this scene occurs only after he has successfully auditioned and been hired as a Burgtheater actor. In the premiere version then Baruch’s act is not the means to an end but rather a consequence and outward sign of his self-determined emancipation.

The second restoration goal was the reconstruction of a colored version. There is no reference for the coloring of the German premiere version and the available export prints display different color palettes. Only two copies — the Swedish and the American version — share the same color selection and distribution. On that basis, this color palette was chosen as a reference and its tinting and toning were transferred to the digital color space.

Besides the reconstruction of the narrative sequence on the macro level, a third restoration goal — on the micro level — was formulated: the greatest possible completeness and integrity also within each shot. Almost every shot in the available copies had a deficit, either because it was shortened at the beginning or end or because damaged frames in the middle were removed at the splices. To restore continuous movement and soft transitions at the splices, these missing frames had to be salvaged from other sources.
Since it was not possible to make most of these fragmented decisions a priori in an examination of the material itself, it became necessary to make a full-length scan (3k, wetgate) of all the available copies. The reconstruction proceeded then in a digital editing program (AVID), in which shot by shot the different sources were compared according to the following parameters: photographic quality, damage, number of lacunae, total length. At the end of this phase in the reconstruction about a third of the shots were composed of two or more sources.

That way almost all lacunae in the selected shots could be filled with material from other sources. With a length of 135 minutes at 20 frames per second, the reconstruction reaches the total length of the German premiere version.

In the following steps of the restoration — the digital retouching and grading — the micro-level reconstruction involved the most labor. This final phase was time intensive and required a great deal of expertise and sensitivity: to fit the various elements together in terms of damage, light values and geometric placement so that shots composed of material from diverse sources would appear as a continuum.

*A bonus feature on the disc includes exemplary scenes that illustrate the steps of the reconstruction and restoration.*

— Daniel Meiller

Translated from the German by Cynthia Walk
About the Orchestral Score of Philippe Schoeller

Nina Goslar
(ZDF/Arte)

Philippe Schoeller belongs among the European composers currently writing the most interesting scores for silent film. He represents a generation of composers whose work occupies the space between a purely historicizing accompaniment and a programmatic New Music that is largely autonomous of the film.

By contrast, the film music of Philippe Schoeller communicates with the image. It does not anticipate the film, instead it reacts to the formal construction and the dramaturgy of light so significant in silent film – that is especially striking in The Ancient Law. With its transparent sound the score brings out the visual quality of the film and combines different composition techniques including minimal music and microtonality.

The music is written for a 12-person chamber orchestra. With this flexible group (seven strings plus flute, oboe, clarinet, accordion, percussion) the composer creates a finely worked score, that in its modernity also thematizes distance and loss. At the same time it makes us aware of the innovative character of the film. In The Ancient Law Dupont mobilizes the resources of cinematography, as they will become meaningful for later generations. With his score, Philippe Schoeller creates a resonant space in which present and past merge. His composition shifts between construction and emphasis; it is modern in conception and yet on the track of the metaphysics of sound – the best prerequisites to draw an arc from an historical film to the contemporary audience.

Philippe Schoeller (born 1957) studied musicology and philosophy at the Sorbonne, took courses with Pierre Boulez at the College de France and pursued the study of sound synthesis at the IRCAM institute in Paris. In addition to his activity as a composer for concert-, ensemble- and vocal works, that are performed internationally by high profile orchestras like the Ensemble Intercontemporain or the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, he is engaged with film music.

The Orchester Jacobsplatz München (OJM) was founded in 2005 by the conductor, Daniel Grossmann, and under his leadership has developed into an excellent musical ensemble with a strong focus. Its programmatic emphasis is the work of Jewish composers together with the music of the 20./21./ centuries. With its interdisciplinary music projects, OJM opens new spaces for contemporary German-Jewish culture.
Collaborating on a new musical score for *Das alte Gesetz (The Ancient Law)*

Donald Sosin and Alicia Svigals

Our music for *Das Alte Gesetz (The Ancient Law)* was written to evoke the sounds and spirit of the world the film inhabits, including the plangent and ecstatic melodies of the Jewish shtetl. For the scenes that unfold in the traditional Yiddish-speaking hometown of the protagonist, the rabbi’s son, we composed and improvised *nigunim*, or wordless Hasidic songs that are sung with religious fervor. Some, like the opening strains of the score, are meditative; others, as in the Purim holiday dance scenes, joyful and played at a gallop. Svigals interprets these melodies on the violin with unique instrumental effects that have been passed down from fiddler to fiddler for centuries and give klezmer playing its unmistakable flavor. These *krekhtsn*, as they are called, imitate the vocal stylings of the synagogue cantor and the Yiddish folksinger, punctuating musical phrases with sobbing and laughing sounds that lend the genre its high emotional affect.

When the rabbi’s son ventures out into the wider world and, ultimately, the great capital of Vienna, the sonic landscape shifts. The score pivots now to Viennese-style ballroom dances, and piano fantasies improvised by Sosin that draw on the art music aesthetic of the age of silent film, bending and turning to follow the motions of the indelible characters in the story. In addition to piano, Sosin uses digital samples of cello, clarinet, a string orchestra and a whole marching band to add instrumental color to the musical palette, including three pieces of music associated with Vienna — the *Austria-Marsch* Op. 20 and *Liebeslieder Waltz*, Op. 114, of Johann Strauss, Jr. who is portrayed in the film, and an excerpt of the slow movement of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4.

This is the first collaboration for Svigals and Sosin. Both composer/musicians have classical training and are exceptional improvisers, which made for three days of unique recording sessions at Stone Studios in Lakeville, Connecticut. While all of Svigals’ work took place during that time, Sosin added the other instrumentation during the following week in his own studio, playing solo piano or filling in piano, accordion and string orchestra accompaniments to Svigals’ studio solos. Listening to the entire score, it is often difficult to hear how each section was created — whether a written tune of Svigals, an improvised tune by Sosin, or a true collaboration as they played to the film, finding new synergetic musical approaches to each scene.
ABOUT THIS FILM

Archival Materials
Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv
Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique
Svenska Film Institute
Gosfilmofond of Russia
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Music 1: orchestral score composed by
Philippe Schoeller (2017)
Commissioned by Deutsche Kinemathek and ZDF / ARTE

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Performed by
Orchester Jakobsplatz München:
Christine Müller (flute)
Hideki Machida (oboe)
Sofiya Molchanova (clarinet)
Sandor Galgoczi (violin)
Emanuel Wiesler (violin)
Charlotte Walterspiel (viola)
Julia Ruge (viola)
Aniko Zeke (cello)
Emil Bekir (cello)
Artem Ter-Minassian (double bass)
Kai Wangler (accordeon)
Moritz Knapp (percussion)

Conductor
Daniel Grossmann

Recording
Anton Rädler
auris aurea recording studio

Producer
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2eleven || contemporary music projects

A co-production of Deutsche Kinemathek - Museum for Film and Television
ZDF in collaboration with ARTE © 2017

Music 2: ensemble score composed by
Donald Sosin and Alicia Svigals (2017)

Played by
Alicia Svigals, Violin
Donald Sosin, Keyboard

Recording
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Lakeville, Connecticut USA

Producer
Donald Sosin

Post-production of both musical scores for cinema and home video
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