

Whose Piano Is This Anyway? Vienna University Library and the Looted
Heritage of the University's Jewish Luminaries: A Double Case Study
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Description: This paper presents two intriguing new cases that have recently been under the investigation of Vienna University Library's NS-provenance research project on the university's research and teaching collections, namely those of two erstwhile Jewish professors at the University of Vienna and distinguished players in the social networks of the fin-de- siècle Jewish elite: Guido Adler (1855 – 1941), musicologist of world repute, and Berthold Hatschek (1854 – 1941), innovative and influential zoologist. Caught up in the ever increasing anti-Semitic terror of the interwar years, both died in loneliness and misery within a month of the year 1941. Their multifaceted and widely scattered material legacies, which include private libraries, archival bequest, and teaching objects alike, have turned up in the holdings of the university at various points in time during its postwar history. The account given of these case studies will include positive and negative research results, the quest for heirs, and restitution.

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Good afternoon everybody and thank you for attending this talk about provenance work on the historical research and teaching collections of the University of Vienna, Austria.

My name is Monika Schreiber. I head the Jewish Studies Library of the University of Vienna and have been a member of Vienna University Library's National Socialist provenance research team for almost three years, investigating the university's **object collections** regarding their possible provenance from National Socialist looting campaigns.

National Socialist authorities pillaged cultural property all over Europe. This brand of war crime affected, not least of all, scholarly and scientific **estates**, such as: private libraries, object collections of academic significance, and literary estates of Jewish and other persecuted academics. The confiscated goods were usually redistributed to research and teaching

institutions throughout the Third Reich. As one of the leading academic institutions within the German-speaking realm, the University of Vienna was a major beneficiary of these campaigns.

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This issue was officially addressed by the University of Vienna in 2004, with the establishment of the Vienna University Library's National Socialist provenance research team, which has been very successful in tracking down print material confiscated by the Nazis among the holdings of the University Library; as a result of more than 400,000 item-per-item inspections, about twenty collections of books have been returned to the heirs of their former, rightful owners, and still counting. In 2014, the book project was expanded to also include non-book material, namely the university's historical research and teaching collections.

As some of you might remember, I first introduced this endeavor to the AJL audience during our 50th annual meeting in Silver Spring two years ago. Since then, I have become attached to two intriguing new cases, which I'd like to elaborate on.

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Today's presentation is about two Jewish professors at the University of Vienna, whose material legacies have turned up among the holdings of the University after World War II: Guido Adler, musicologist of world repute, and Berthold Hatschek, innovative and influential zoologist.

Let me start with a few sidelights on Guido Adler's and Berthold Hatschek's biographies, and how they overlap:

[PP 4]: Biographical sidelights

Adler and Hatschek were contemporaries and friends, born mid-19th century to middle-class, German-speaking, Jewish families in small-town Moravia (then a province of the Austro-

Hungarian Empire). Both ascended into Vienna's fin-de-siècle upper class by attaining full professorships at the University of Vienna. Finally, they both met sorry and miserable deaths a month apart in Vienna's winter of 1941.

Following his studies at the Vienna Conservatory and a doctoral degree in the history of music from the University of Vienna, **Guido Adler** became a professor of musical history in Prague in 1885. Thirteen years later, in 1898, he was appointed professor at the University of Vienna, where he subsequently founded the world's first department of musicology. He retired in 1927.

Guido Adler, a trained pianist, mingled with musical celebrities of every description (he was, for instance, the friend, mentor, and first biographer of Gustav Mahler, himself of Moravian-Jewish background). A self-confident man with a keen sense of mission, his stupendous networking and fundraising skills are well attested. The Jewish elite and higher-echelon public administration officials who populated the Viennese salons were no match for Adler's persuasiveness and thus greatly contributed to endowing the new university department with equipment and the wherewithal for teaching activities.

Guido Adler was married to Betty Berger. They had two children: a daughter, Melanie, who was killed in the Shoah, and a son, Hubert Joachim, who emigrated to the U.S. in 1938.

After earning a doctorate in zoology from the University of Leipzig, **Berthold Hatschek** was awarded a professorship by the University of Prague in 1885. In 1896, he was appointed full professor at the Second Department of Zoology of the University of Vienna. Increasingly

crippled by depression, Hatschek gradually lost his writing abilities: his last substantial publication dates back to 1915. He continued teaching, though, until his retirement in 1925.

Berthold Hatschek was married to Marie Rosenthal. They had two daughters, Auguste and Anna Maria, both of whom fled the Nazis to the U.S. and London, respectively.

Berthold Hatschek and Guido Adler had become friends as young professors in Prague (1885 to 1896). They continued their friendship in Vienna, where their orbits frequently intersected in the salons of the Jewish elites. But while Adler took to those social gatherings like the proverbial duck to water, Hatschek was socially awkward and mostly tagged along with his wife. Marie Hatschek was well-connected, a renowned society painter and sister of the famous piano virtuoso Moriz Rosenthal. Indeed, most connections between Adler and Hatschek in Vienna appear to have been through Moriz Rosenthal and his family.

[Incidentally, Moriz Rosenthal died as an émigré in New York.]

However, the most remarkable, and perhaps the most sustained, connection between the two played out on the **intellectual** level:

Berthold Hatschek was a marine biologist trained in Darwinian evolutionary thinking. Based on a species of maritime animal (the *lancelet*, or *amphioxus*), whose larvae he studied extensively, he devised groundbreaking and widely acknowledged models of the evolution of invertebrates, and later of the whole animal kingdom – achievements which earned him the reputation of being the premier comparative anatomist of his time.

While in Prague, Adler studied Hatschek's biological methodology and taxonomy, which he gradually transferred into the basic structure of his own methodological propositions in the field of musicology – then a novel subject of the liberal arts, with still somewhat inchoate theoretical foundations. By way of this “scientification”, Adler not only created a viable

epistemic framework for his profession which has retained its validity to this day, but secured, at the same time, the institutional acknowledgement necessary for it to acquire its proper place in academia (departments, funding, etc.). Thus, the merging of intellectual traditions, manifest in the friendship between two Moravian Jews teaching very disparate subjects in Prague, seems to have resulted in the birth of modern musicology.

Later Lives and Deaths

By 1938, the year of the annexation of the Republic of Austria by National Socialist Germany, both Guido Adler and Berthold Hatschek were octogenarians whose illness and frailty stood in the way of emigration. Due to their position in Austria's cultural and intellectual life, and probably also due to their age, both of them survived until their natural death in 1941. Nevertheless, they were victims of the ostracism and hostility which afflicted Jewish academics at that time.

Tragically also, those of Adler's and Hatschek's next of kin who had not emigrated perished in the Shoah. Melanie Adler, who had returned from Germany to care for her dependent father, went into hiding after his passing, but was caught by the Gestapo, deported to the Maly Trostinec extermination camp in May 1942, and murdered there. Marie Hatschek Rosenthal left Vienna for Belgrade immediately after Berthold's funeral, where she moved into her sister's household. Neither of the two Rosenthal sisters survived the 1941 Nazi invasion of Yugoslavia: both were arrested and shot on the outskirts of Belgrade, probably in 1942.

[PP 5] Descendants of Guido Adler and Betty Berger

Guido Adler's property has been the subject of provenance research for decades, mainly due to his son Hubert Joachim Adler, of Phillipsburg, NJ, and his grandson, the lawyer Tom

Adler, who have actively sought restitution of the family property since the immediate post-war years.

Soon after Guido Adler's death in 1941, and notwithstanding his daughter Melanie's protests, his private villa was looted and his substantial library and literary estate were confiscated.

When the material was subsequently distributed among several musicological libraries in Vienna, the bulk was given to the Vienna University Library and the affiliated library of the Musicology Department.

However, thanks to Hubert Adler's activities, his father's library and correspondence were restituted by the Austrian authorities as early as 1949 – 1951. Further instances of restitution followed, until, in 2010, yet another set of books and archival material was discovered at the Vienna University Library – remnants from Guido's original library that had been overlooked and were returned to the Adler family in 2013.

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Further objects associated with Guido Adler have remained in the possession of the University of Vienna: the Instrument Collection of the Department of Musicology holds three historical keyboard instruments (a grand piano, a harpsichord, and a clavichord).

Thus, between the heirs' public activities and its own experience with Guido Adler's stolen possessions, the investigation into those instruments has become a pressing issue for the provenance research team at the Vienna University Library since no later than 2013.

Today, I would like to focus on one instrument: the magnificent, black-coated grand piano (in German: *Flügel*), casually known at the department as the "Adler *Flügel*", much valued and carefully maintained by members of staff. It is a high-quality instrument built by Bösendorfer, Austria's prime piano manufacturer and, as such, also of considerable material value.

Despite its prominence, however, the precise ownership status of the grand piano has long been shrouded in uncertainty. Whose piano was this, anyway? Was the university its lawful owner, or did it just hold one more item from Guido Adler's looted property? So, when I first set out to explore the question in early 2015, I met with great interest and cooperativeness among staff members of the Department of Musicology.

And, fortunately, clarity emerged in less than two years. While modern inventories provide as little evidence as documents from the war epoch, archival materials from Adler's time yielded the evidence sought.

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There are, in particular, two autograph documents to rely on: a letter to Adler from January 1899, in which Ludwig Bösendorfer, owner of the piano manufacture, testifies to a permanent, gratuitous loan of the grand piano to the Department immediately after Guido Adler's appointment as professor. A contemporaneous note in Adler's own handwriting, found in the department's chronicle, corroborates this information.

Thus, the final report we filed at the beginning of this year officially removes any trace of legal uncertainty surrounding this valuable piano. On the one hand, this means legal security for the university and the Department in terms of ownership. On the other hand, as opposed to Adler's library and literary estate, it is evident that there will be no restitution in this case. The same applies to the two other instruments: the stunning black-and-turquoise harpsichord and the modest clavichord, both of which had been officially acquired by the University of Vienna through the agency of Guido Adler.

So the suspicion that the instruments represented Nazi loot was not confirmed. But what the investigation yielded beyond that is a complete history of these exquisite musical

instruments, which may be seen as precious memorabilia of Guido Adler's lifework, and at the same time of the signature passion and energy with which he engaged in it.

[PP 8] Descendants of Berthold Hatschek and Marie Hatschek Rosenthal

The second provenance case is the collection of Berthold Hatschek's mementos at the Department of Zoology, and I would like to emphasize at this point that provenance work on Hatschek's possessions is still at its inception.

Difficulties arise from most of Hatschek's estate not being physically extant today. Written mention of it only occurs on German seizure lists from Belgrade. The reason appears to be that, at some point in time prior to her fleeing Vienna in 1941, his widow Marie had transferred the couple's complete personal belongings to Belgrade (more on that soon).

Another issue derives from Berthold and Marie Hatschek's heirs being extremely elusive, in contrast to Guido Adler's. Down their eldest daughter's line, Augusta Dessauer, only one great-granddaughter has been identified and contacted. She has so far proven indifferent and uncooperative. No offspring of Anna Maria Geschwind, the younger daughter, has been identified so far.

Furthermore, mental illness and alienation caused Berthold Hatschek to destroy many of his own personal documents, so that relatively little is known about Hatschek's life and the state of his property (again, in contrast to Guido Adler's).

Therefore, our research project on Hatschek did not start off against a dense background of previous claims and restitution of the sort which had characterized the Adler case. Rather, research interest emerged after staff at the Department of Zoology of the University of Vienna had made a startling discovery among their research and teaching collections.

The zoological collection (half a million objects) includes a large amount of animal preparations Hatschek had collected himself during his active younger years as a field researcher on the Mediterranean shores – such as this one, which shows the model organism on which he based his research:

[PP 9]: Sections through the *lancelet* or *amphioxus* in its larval stage.

While these preparations appear to be historically and legally inconspicuous, somewhere among all those ancient animal vestiges, a number of old caskets and files emerged which seem to have been languishing there for decades, more or less unnoted.

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They contain a miscellany of personal and scientific documents relating both to Berthold and his wife, of which I'd like to show three items:

[PP 11] (1) A collation of original manuscripts by Berthold, some of which were never published. Here is, for example, a hand sketch visualizing the embryonic development of a maritime mollusk similar to the *lancelet* we just saw.

[PP 12] (2) A Siddur *Tefillat Yisra'el* (daily prayer book), published in Vienna in 1883, which may have belonged to Marie.

[PP 13] (3) The last will and testament of Berthold's grandfather Baruch (made out back in Moravia in 1853).

Realizing the significance of their find, people at the zoological department initially embarked on their own research and found out about the Belgrade report I mentioned before: it was issued by the Balkan division of the "*Reichsleiter Rosenberg Taskforce*" [known in German as the ERR – "*Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg*"], the Nazi looting organization for cultural assets.

[PP 14]: Original cover letters of the report ...

... which mentions no less than five containers with personal belongings, as confiscated from Marie Hatschek Rosenthal around the time of her murder, among them “parts of the scientific estate of the Jewish university professor Dr. Berthold Hatschek”.

A significant further amount of plunder is listed in it: correspondence, a private library, paintings, as well as material from Moriz Rosenthal’s archival estate, which his sister Marie had kept. But information about the current whereabouts of those items is scarce. Most of them seem to have vanished. Thus, the impression arose that the slim estate retrieved from the Vienna zoological collection might represent “the tip of an iceberg”, the last remnants of originally more extensive Nazi loot of which Berthold Hatschek’s widow had been despoiled in Belgrade. It was on the basis of that assumption that the provenance research team was contacted by the zoological department and asked for assistance.

Although there are strong arguments in favor of this surmise, at this point in time those caskets do not unequivocally qualify as part of the reported Belgrade loot. This is due to the somewhat unspecific formulation of the ERR report, but also to the unresolved question of the manner in which the objects may have found their way from the Balkans back to post-war Vienna. Hard evidence is thus unavailable at the moment, while Berthold and Marie’s descendants – inasmuch as they even exist – appear unlikely to extend any assistance in the matter.

Nevertheless, it is our responsibility as the University Library’s provenance team to do our utmost to clarify the provenance of Berthold Hatschek’s estate – what little is left of it and is currently in the university’s possession. For us, this means a lot of groundwork, such as creating an inventory, making archive queries, further sifting through the evidence available, as well as further search for possible heirs – work steps that will be performed in cooperation with the Department of Zoology.

But this is not only about a potential case of restitution (which the research may certainly bring about).

[PP 15 Let me summarize the variety of benefits inherent in provenance research]

It is also about the memory of Berthold Hatschek, the man and the scientist, a memory which clearly deserves more attention than it has so far received. In fact, even in the case of Guido Adler, it was provenance work which inspired and helped finance broader research into his life and legacy: the last round of restitution in 2013 was crowned by an international meeting on Guido Adler which resulted in a major conference volume published only this week.

The time and scrutiny invested in provenance work is always worthwhile, which has consistently been confirmed by our research into the university's academic collections, as well. In this particular context, our efforts result in an utterly fact-based way of writing – and sometimes re-writing – the history of scholarship, science, and their institutions during the Holocaust. The Adler and Hatschek projects are our contribution to the restoration of historical knowledge and fairness on behalf of important intellectuals whose property was ravaged, whose lifetime achievements were damaged, and who, often along with their loved ones, perished in the Shoah. And this is why we remain responsible and committed.