

## **STATEMENT OF GRANT PURPOSE**

Sonja Larson, Poland, Musicology

Jewish Music in Post-WWII Krakow: Rebuilding Community and Revitalizing Culture

From sung prayers in worship services to traditional dances to folk songs sung in community gatherings and in homes, music has historically been an integral part of Jewish culture. Music has served as a means to retain community, identity, and history for the Jewish people, repeatedly persecuted, separated, and long without their “Promised Land”. Though almost completely destroyed in the genocide against the Jewish people in the Second World War, the Jewish community of Krakow, Poland, is re-establishing itself in astonishing ways. The Jewish Community Center is newly established, vibrant, and growing, and the 23<sup>rd</sup> Jewish Culture Festival was held in Krakow’s Jewish district, Kazimierz, in the summer of 2013.

How did this community at risk of extinction rebuild itself and create one of the largest international Jewish culture festivals in the world? Music is an unquestionably significant part of Krakow’s Jewish Culture Festival; workshops on Jewish music as well as the biggest names in Jewish traditional and contemporary music bring in Jews and non-Jews from around the world. Kazimierz is the annual meeting place for Jews globally, and its local community is growing through music. Krakow’s Jewish Community Center brings all ages together in its choir and Israeli dance classes.

My proposal focuses specifically on the role of music in the rebuilding of Krakow’s Jewish community and the revitalization of Jewish culture. Some of the questions I will explore through my research include: What was the rebuilding process after the war until now, and what was music’s role in that process? How has music’s role changed during this process? What kind of genre and/or medium of music was most effective in communal growth and cultural preservation? How did Jewish cultural/community growth in Krakow differ from other cities such as Warsaw, Lublin, and Lodz? How did post-WWII music help rebuild the non-Jewish Krakow community? Was there a limit to music’s capability in the rebuilding process? How is music being used to build the Jewish community in Krakow today?

Dr. Naliwajek-Mazurek, a musicology professor at the University of Warsaw, has researched, published, and presented internationally on topics including Polish contemporary music, music during the Nazi occupation, and music and politics in the 1930s and 1940s. She has dedicated her life to the questions that have fueled my research. Though I will live and study in Krakow, Dr. Naliwajek-Mazurek has agreed to advise me via telephone and email. Her location and connections will aid me in attaining materials from the University of Warsaw, the Jewish Historical Institute, the Museum of the History of the Polish Jews, and the Warsaw Jewish Community Center. I will also travel to Warsaw as needed to meet with Dr. Naliwajek-Mazurek and to attend cultural events related to my research.

Music is an art form that happens in real time. Its quality in performance cannot be preserved in a museum but requires the breath, vision, skill, and artistry of musicians. To fully experience the Jewish music of Krakow today, I will collaborate with Michal Szostalo, the director of the Krakow’s Jewish Community Center Choir. In addition to participation and observation of the choir, I will work with Mr. Szostalo to develop a sustaining connection between an established choir in Israel and potentially help organize a trip to Israel. In collaboration with Janusz Makuch, director of external relations at the Jewish Culture Festival in Krakow, I will research the history, process, and effects of the Festival. I will gain additional resources from and will attend cultural events at the Galicia Museum in Krakow. Finally, the

staff members at the Varia Polish language school, particularly Ms. Ola Goldyn and Ms. Monika Lis, have agreed to assist me with translations throughout my research.

Immersing myself in the life and culture of Krakow and its Jewish community will give me a historical and cultural context impossible to attain elsewhere. During the duration of my Fulbright study, I will participate in the Jewish Community Center's choir and Israeli dance classes, take Yiddish and Hebrew classes at the Center, observe Jewish religious ceremonies and holiday celebrations, and take Polish classes at the Varia Polish Language Center. From October through December, I will gather information by analysing primary documents surrounding music in Krakow from the post-war period to the present. These documents include, but are not limited to, publicity materials, newspapers, concert programs, music reviews, letters, and diaries. From January through March, I will conduct and analyze interviews with willing locals, scholars, and current members of the Center's choir and Israeli dance class. From March to June, I will analyse and compile the information and develop a lecture series to present to communities and universities upon my return to the United States. I will complete a multi-media blog about my Fulbright experience that will combine photography, music, poetry, and writings about my time in Poland. Finally, I will develop a model of community building through music that can be applied globally to populations that have suffered similar destruction.

Past experience traveling abroad alone and conducting research independently has equipped me with the skills needed for my research project in Poland. In addition to other European study trips, I went to Poland for two months in the summer of 2013 to study music in the Holocaust. I took intensive language courses at the Varia Polish Language School in Krakow, attended workshops and performances at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Jewish Culture Festival in Krakow, and presented research at the 5<sup>th</sup> *Warsaw Conference for Young Judaic Studies Researchers* at the University of Warsaw. I became familiar with the Polish culture and the cities of Krakow and Warsaw, and I also learned about Jewish culture. Additionally, my degree in voice performance and my extensive choral experience have provided me with the skills necessary to analyze information pertaining to music.

I will also be presenting my research from the past two years at local conferences in Wisconsin this academic year, including the Midwest Holocaust Consortium's June 2014 meeting. Additionally, I will be presenting at an international conference, *Protest Music in the Twentieth Century*, sponsored by Centro Studi Opera Omnia Luigi Boccherini in Lucca, Italy, this November. Through my proposed research, I will expand my current knowledge base of music in the Holocaust to the music of the post-WWII period.

The Fulbright Scholarship will allow me not only to conduct my research and completely engage in a different culture, but it will also help me further my academic and professional goals. In the future, I will pursue graduate work in musicology or international relations. I am interested in the possibilities of researching the connections between music and sociology, especially in the context of war and genocide. I am also interested in the healing and restorative power of music in the lives of individuals and in communities. This research project will help me understand how, after unthinkable tragedy, music was important for rebuilding the community and an essential element of cultural restoration. There is no better time to conduct this research than now; the Holocaust survivors who can attest to their experiences after the war will all be gone soon. Not only will my research shed light on the restorative abilities of music in the Jewish community of Krakow, but it will also provide therapeutic solutions for current and future populations. With the continuation of war and genocide globally, it is essential to develop innovative solutions to peacefully and effectively rebuild communities domestically and abroad.