

Discovering Lev Aronson

**Preserving the Past and
Looking Toward the Future
with Digital Special
Collections**

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SEMLA, October 4, 2014**

Background: Lev Aronson



- Cellist, teacher, composer
- Little known outside the cello world
- Best known as a teacher of great cellists: Lynn Harrell, Ralph Kirshbaum, Brian Thornton

Background: Lev Aronson

- Born in Germany, grew up in Latvia with some time in Russia
- Studied cello in Berlin, promising solo career
- Imprisoned in 5 different concentration camps during WWII
- Immigrated to US in 1948
- Performed with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra
- Taught privately and at Southern Methodist University and Baylor University



Background: Cello Collection

- **University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), Special Collections & University Archives (SCUA)**
- **11 Cellists (8 processed, cataloged, and with finding aids)**
- **Largest collection of cello music in the world**
- **Also holds photographs, sound and video recordings, personal papers, a small but growing oral history collection, and more**

Background: Digital Project

- **Unique**
 - Digitizing manuscripts, sometimes in multiple drafts, sometimes also with published version(s)
 - When digitizing published material, it is for the annotations, not the actual published piece
- **All collections in the UNCG Cello Collection represented (200 items total)**
- **Building a base for crowd-source funding of digitization of more materials**

Background: Digital Project

- **Lev Aronson Collection** prioritized in this project
 - **Teacher of many dominant cellists**
 - **Recently-acquired and -processed collection**
 - **Amazing life story**
 - **Compositions (almost all in manuscript form) as historical artifacts**





What's happened so far...

- **All Aronson manuscripts for this stage digitized (.tif files)**
- **Basic metadata harvested from MARC catalog records**
 - **Stored on Google Drive spreadsheet**

What now...

- Add more detailed descriptive elements to spreadsheet
 - Instrumentation
 - Simple vocabulary
 - Background and other useful information when known
 - “This song likely written for tenor voice and piano.”
 - Summaries of song subjects
 - Usually Yiddish lyrics

In heiligem Gedenken an meine lieben Eltern.

Der durchgemarterte Weg.

Worte von August Schalkhan u. Lew Aronsan

Lew Aronsan.

Andante sostenuto. (Langsam, schleppend).

The first system of the piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The right hand is in treble clef with a 6/8 time signature and a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. It features a series of chords, primarily triads and dyads, moving in a stepwise fashion across five measures. The left hand is in bass clef and provides a harmonic foundation with chords and single notes, including a prominent bass line in the first measure.

The second system includes a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in treble clef and contains the lyrics: "A Felt ful mit Heis-lech, a - rum he-che Za-men, Kle-der, ge-streif-te, un". The piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The right hand is in treble clef with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking and features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The left hand is in bass clef and provides harmonic support with chords and a steady bass line.



*Gregor Shelkan and Lev Aronson, cover photograph for
"Der Durchgemater ter Weg," published in Berlin, c. 1946*

Image from: UNCG
Cello Collection

A Felt ful mit Heis-lech, a - rum he-che Za-men, Kle-der, ge-streif-te, un

Pain, — die Kelt um der Hun-ger ba - gle-ten se sten-dig, se se-hen Ken lich-ti-ge

The first system of the handwritten musical score consists of a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written in a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The lyrics are written below the notes. The piano accompaniment is written in two staves, with the right hand in a treble clef and the left hand in a bass clef. The music is in a 7/8 time signature. The first measure of the vocal line has a fermata over the note 'A'. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and block chords in the left hand.

Schein. — Es ge-hen Ko-lo-nen in Schritt und in Tritt, sei We-ren ge-jagt und ge-

The second system of the handwritten musical score continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written in a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The lyrics are written below the notes. The piano accompaniment is written in two staves, with the right hand in a treble clef and the left hand in a bass clef. The music is in a 7/8 time signature. The first measure of the vocal line has a fermata over the note 'Schein.'. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and block chords in the left hand. The dynamic markings 'marc.' and 'mf' are present in the piano accompaniment.



What now...

- **Separate materials into separate folders (limited hierarchies)**
 - **Parts and scores**
 - **Different versions**
 - **Published and manuscript**
 - **Other distinct items**

Allegro, ma non troppo.

1
 Ho-mon un Hit-ler heüen sich on mit a -
 heü. *poco f*

2
 heü. Was is der Un-ter-schied zwi-schen sei? Der Un-ter-schied is nor in
poco f *mf*

3
 fu-ren: bei-de ho-ben nit ge-darft we-ren ge-bo-ren! Ho-mon hot ge-
mf

wölt uns al-le-men ver-nich-ten, - un Hit-ler hot ge--sagt:
mf

Allegro, ma non troppo.

Ho-mon un Hit-ler heü-ben sich on mit a -
f *sfz* *poco f* *mf*

heü. *cl.* Was is der Un-ter-schied zwi-schen sei? Der Un-ter-schied is nor in
poco f *mf*

Jo-ren: *cl.* Bei-de ho-ben nit ge-darft we-ren ge-bo-ren! Ho-mon hot ge-
mf

wölt uns al-le-men ver-nich-ten, - un Hit-ler hot ge--sagt:
mf

Moderato *Tempo I.*

Auf die Ju-den Komm ich ver-zich-ten!" Lo-ha-reig u-lz-bed, das is ge-wen sei-er Pa-
f *poco f* *mf*

Aufführungsrecht vorbehalten

"Der Engel"

Lied für eine Singstimme mit Klavierbegleitung.

Worte von Lermontow

Musik von

Lew Arnoff-Aronson

The angel

The heavens bore gently an angel in flight
Who lifted his Chant to the right
The moon and the clouds and the stars
Began to hear
The song rising holy and clear.

He sang of the spirits, the sinless,
The blessed

Who softly in paradise rest,
Of the gardens of God, and of God was
His song,

Ringing as a heavenly gang,
He carried a soul to the dark
Gates of birth, ^{TRAVELING} ~~travelling~~ sorrowful
earth -

and flying, he sang, and the
Soul heard

The deathless, the unuttered
and the Tears in the Heart
Could but sadden and tire

Later...

- **Move spreadsheet info to ContentDM**
- **Go live with digitized items from the Cello Collection**
- **Apply for another library grant to continue digitization of further music materials and collections**
- **Set up a list of pieces and collections and a Paypal account for donations from the public to continue digitization**

Thank you!

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