Discovering Lev Aronson

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

Dr. Sonia Archer-Capuzzo

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

Image from: www.dallasnews.com

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

Image from: brianthorntoncello.com

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

Image from: festivalmozaic.wordpress.com

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."

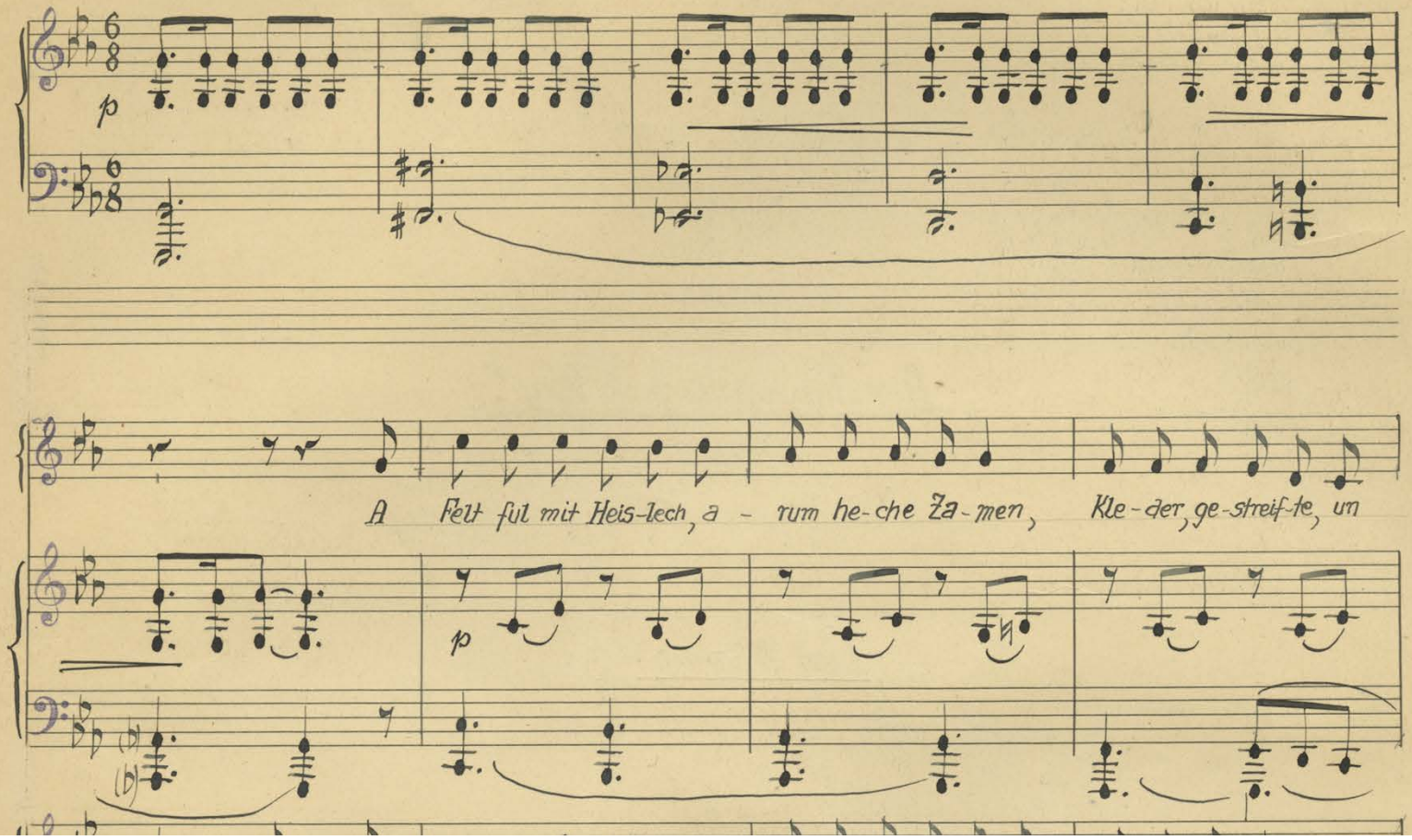
Worte von Kryer Schalkan u. Lew Aronson

Musik von

Lew Aronson.

Lew Aronson.

Andante sostenuto. (Langsam, schleppend).



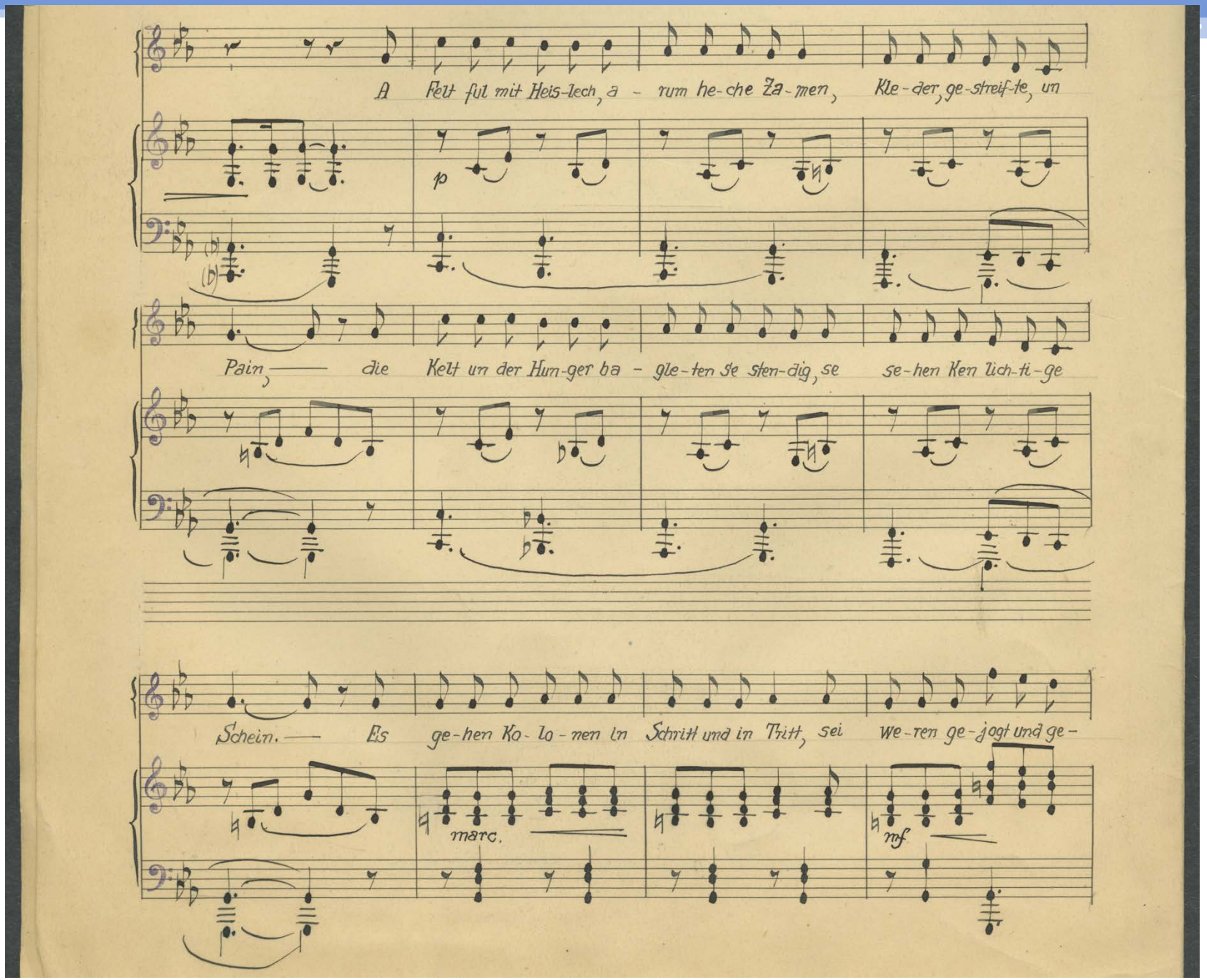
p

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

p

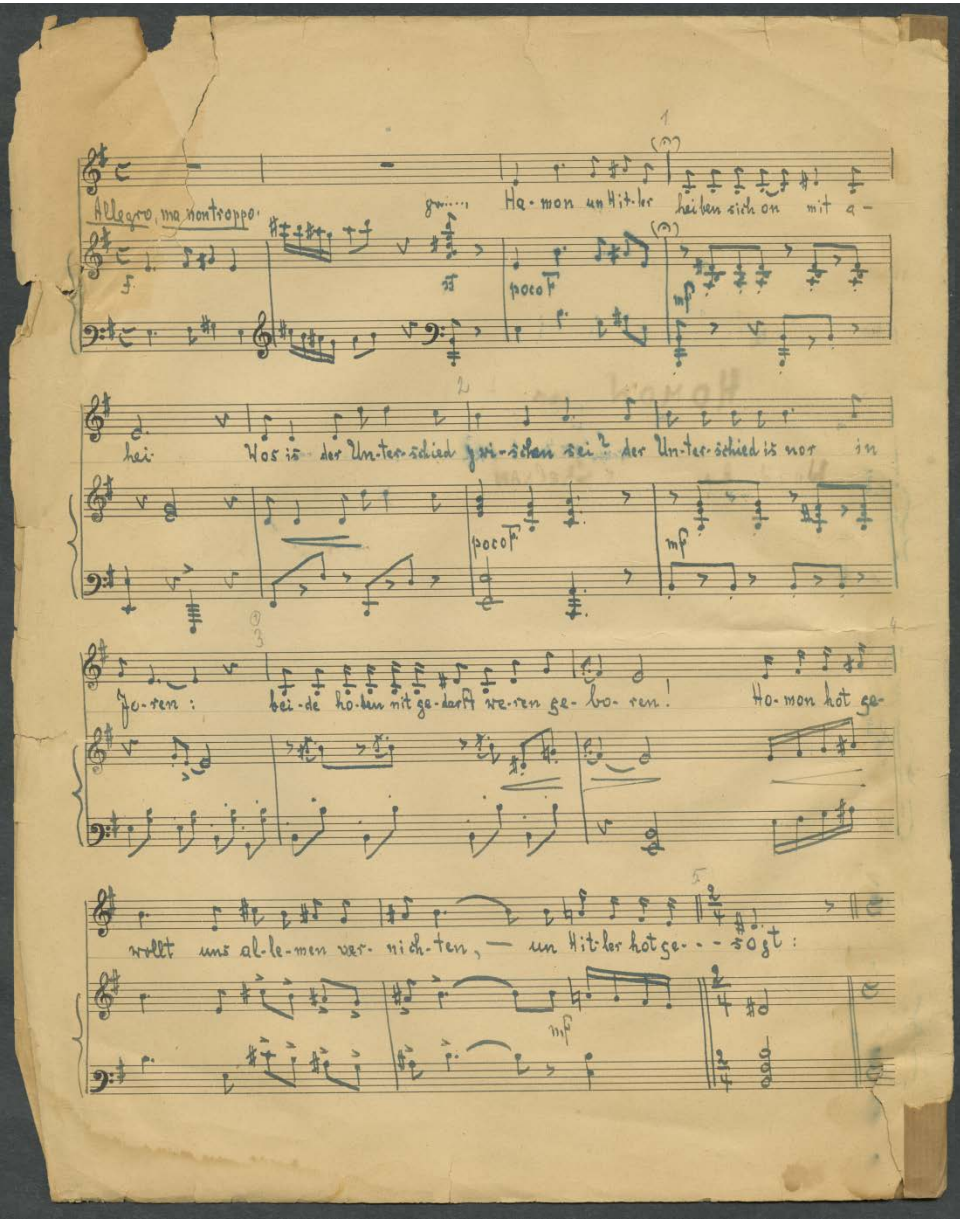
Gregor Shelkan and Lev Aronson, cover photograph for "Der Durchgemater ter Weg," published in Berlin, c. 1946

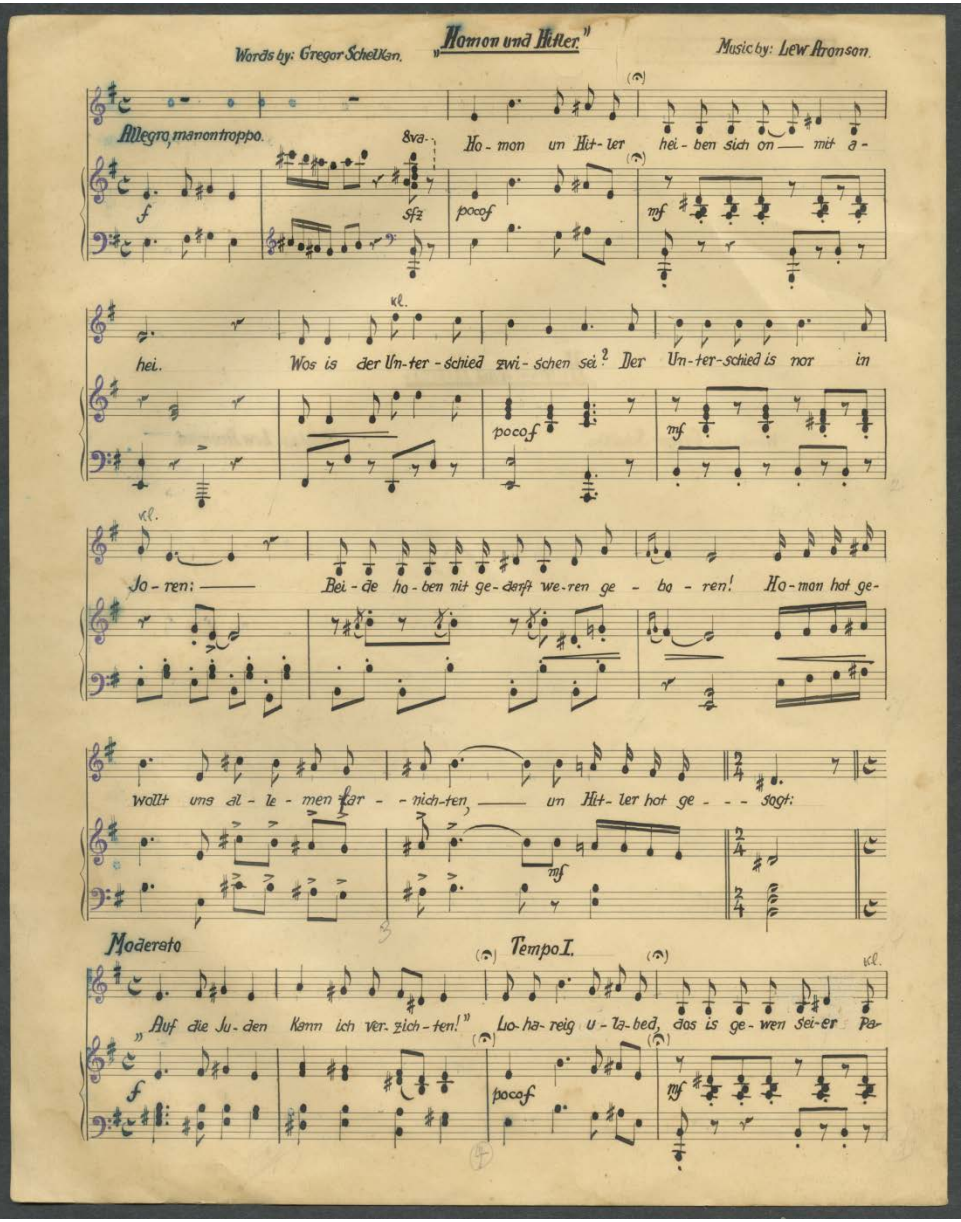
Image from: UNCG Cello Collection

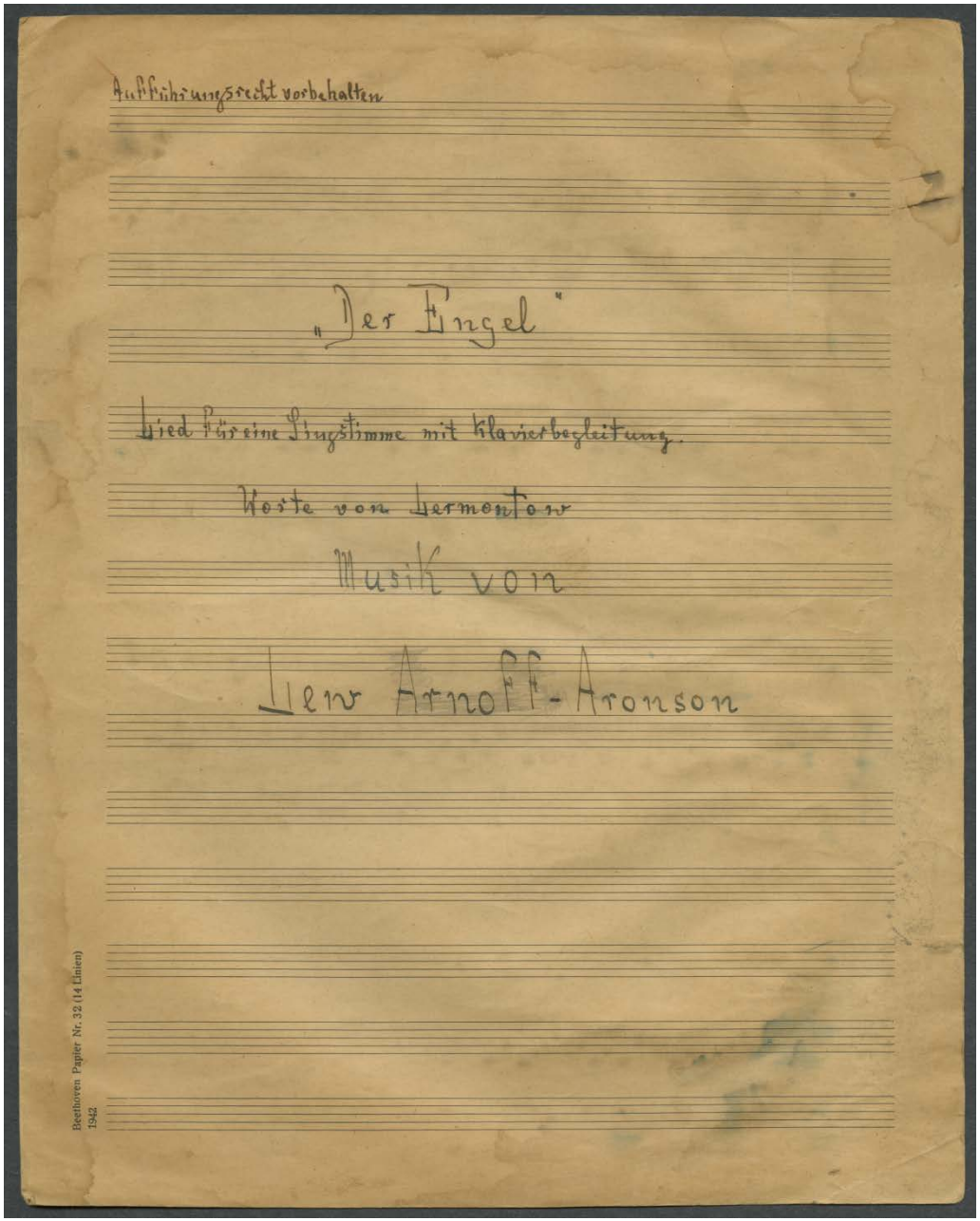

A Kelt ful mit Heis-lech, a - rum he-che Za-men, Kle-der, ge-streif-te, un
p
Pain, die Kelt un der Hun-ger ba - gle-ten se sten-dig, se se-hen Ken lich-ti-ge
Schein. Es ge-hen Ko-lo-nen in Schritt und in Tritt, sei we-ren ge-jogt und ge-
marc.
mf

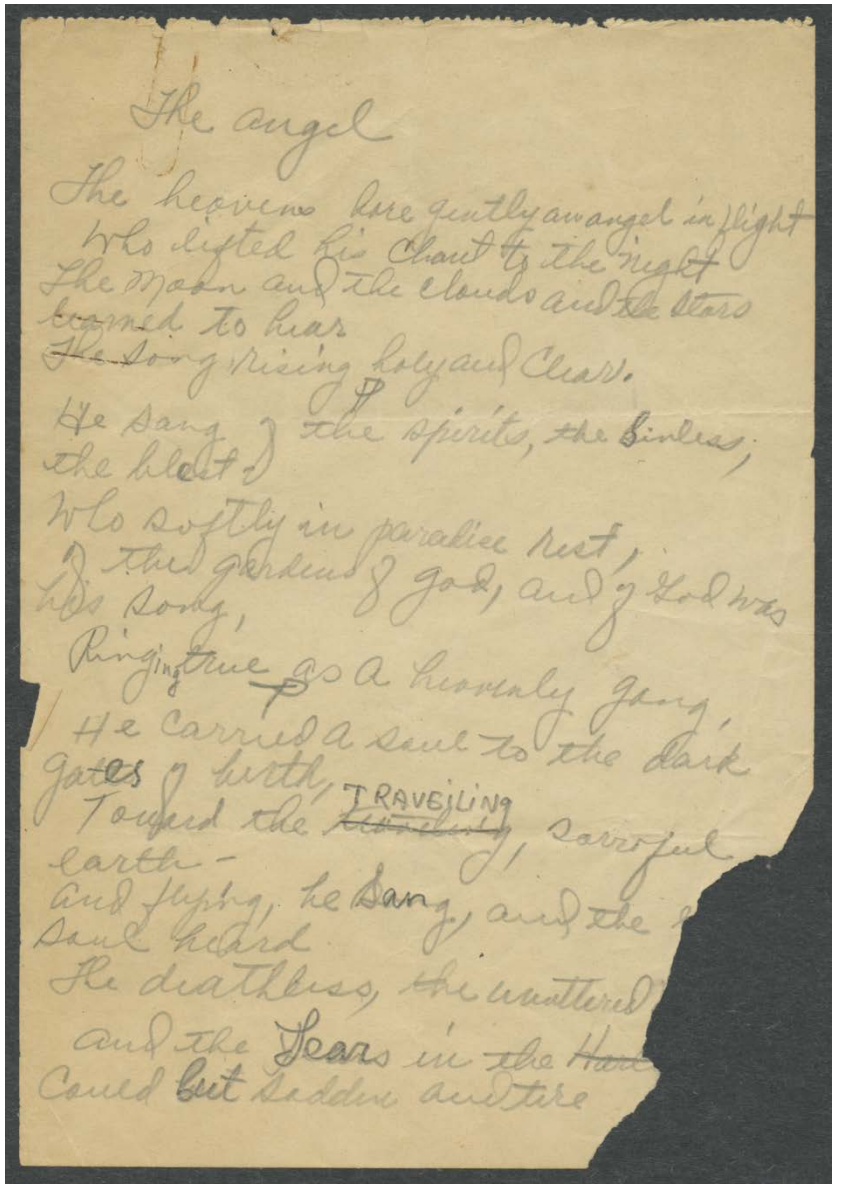
What now…

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


Allegro, ma nontroppo.
Ha-mon un Hit-ler heiben sich on mit a-
hei. Wos is der Un-ter-schied zwi-schen sei? der Un-ter-schied is nor in
jo-ren: bei-de ho-ben nit ge-darft we-ren ge-bo-ren! Ha-mon hot ge-
wollt uns al-le-men var-nich-ten, un Hit-ler hot ge-sogt:


Words by: Gregor Schelkan.
„Homon und Hitler."
Music by: Lew Aronson.
Allegro, manontroppo.
Ho-mon un Hit-ler hei-ben sich on mit a-
hei. Wos is der Un-ter-schied zwi-schen sei? Der Un-ter-schied is nor in
Jo-ren: Bei-de ho-ben nit ge-derft we-ren ge-bo-ren! Ho-mon hot ge-
wollt uns al-le-men far-nich-ten, un Hit-ler hot ge-sogt:
Moderato
Tempo I.
„Auf die Ju-den kann ich ver-zich-ten!" Lio-ha-reig u-la-bed, das is ge-wen sei-er Par-




The angel

The heavens bore gently an angel in flight
Who lifted his chant to the night
The moon and the clouds and the stars
learned to hear
~~The~~ song rising holy and clear.
He sang of the spirits, the sinless,
the blest
Who softly in paradise rest,
of the gardens of god, and of God was
his song,
Ringing true as a heavenly gong,
He carried a soul to the dark
gates of birth,
Toward the ~~[illegible]~~ TRAVELING, sorrowful
earth -
and flying, he sang, and the
soul heard
The deathless, the unuttered
and the Tears in the Hart
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!

Discovering Lev Aronson
SEMLA 2014

Dr. Sonia Archer-Capuzzo
smarcherdma@gmail.com