1. Affirmative Resonances in Urban Space

Albert Leo Schlageter, a former soldier and right-wing activist, was arrested for his role in a sabotage attack on a goods train passing through Düsseldorf in 1923. After being sent to trial, Schlageter was sentenced to death by the French military occupiers of the German Rhine-Ruhr area. Following his death in the early morning hours of 26 May 1923, various political parties tried to seize on Schlageter’s memory, with Communists attempting to downplay his right-wing allegiances in a bid to make a claim on this “service to the German people.”

In the following decade, the National Socialist Party effectively capitalised on Schlageter, producing a range of images, slogans and commemorative events. Almost all aspects of Schlageter’s biography and status as a heroic freedom fighter were fully exploited in the attempt to create a national symbol of anti-French resistance. In fact, the success in promoting Schlageter as a Nazi patriot enabled a popularised appropriation of the anti-French resistance, which magnified his minor part out of all proportion.

The importance of Schlageter for Nazi propaganda took on new proportions after the Nazi Party seized power in January 1933. Schlageter’s role as a Nazi martyr offered an indispensable prototype of the “New Man” needed for the party’s anticipated Volksgemeinschaft: youthful, impulsive, masculine and soldier-like. As a symbol of male sacrifice for the nation, Schlageter thus provided a model for new social relations based on the subordination of individual needs to those of the community. Schlageter’s function within early Nazi propaganda is best illustrated by the massive three-day commemorative festival held in late May 1933, which took place in Düsseldorf on the ten-year anniversary of his death. With over three hundred thousand extra visitors in Düsseldorf, the Nazi newspaper Volksparole described the large scale and intensity of the event in glowing terms:

The dignity of the festival, its size and importance, made its impression on the cityscape. No house without flags, no streets without rows of facades decorated in greenery. […] Never before had Düsseldorf, indeed, one could say, never before had a city in Germany seen a richly coloured spectacle as this. Words no longer suffice, the eyes cannot grasp everything. Incalculable masses of spectators and marching columns.

In this excerpt, Schlageter’s national significance and transformation into a Nazi martyr is emphasised by the magnitude of the visual spectacle. Its mention of flags and colours emphasises a visual overstimulation of the eyes. Yet this de-
scription of sensory overwhelming also implies an auditory experience, with the loud cheers of thousands and the sounds of marching feet producing intense resonances and reverberations in order to “sound out” the entire city landscape (Bull 2000).

Taking this newspaper excerpt as a starting point, in this chapter I seek to elaborate on the sonic components to the Schlageter commemorations in Düsseldorf, and within National Socialism more generally. While significant academic attention has been devoted to the function of visual-textual elements in Nazi propaganda techniques, in what follows, I will specify the role of sound for the popularising and normalising of mythology in public events, which invites a broader consideration of the attempts by National Socialists to spatially organise and occupy urban space in the 1920s and 1930s. In most cases, this battle over public and social space involved violence, but also various corporeal and acoustic strategies for achieving sensory appeal, for demanding the attention and participation of civilians. Political attempts to sound out urban space, as I will suggest, operated on a principle of creating resonance within the city.

Resonant urban spaces usually involve a high acoustic level achieved by an amplitude increase of sound as it reflects off walls and other surfaces in the streets. Acoustics researchers Jean-François Augoyard and Henry Torgue also note that the concept of resonance can span from the resonant systems of specific body parts (such as ear vibration or the vocal canal) to a broader theory of power. Reverberant sounds have been historically considered to be illustrative of sound as a source of potential power and for mediating presence across distances: “resonance is a myth of strength, symbolised by the power of sound” (2005: 108). Even when a particular sound occurs on a regular basis, they note, the exact nature of its resonance is time- and place-specific, mediated by atmospheric conditions and the surfaces the sounds reflect off. This notion of resonance offers a useful framework for my analysis of the Schlageter myth, since, in what follows, my interest is in political strategies for acoustic presence; as part of an aesthetic occupation of the city and an appeal on the basis of the “auditory imagination” (Ihde 1976).

The second component to resonance that I will explore comprises the various forms of listening, vocal and corporeal participation of crowds attending Nazi public events and, with it, the collective creation of “affirmative resonance” (Epping-Jäger 2004a). By establishing the phenomenological dimensions to such auditory experiences, I stress the individual and intersubjective components of large-scale crowds engaged in the specific commemoration of Schlageter. After introducing the abovementioned concepts and their relevance to my case study, I focus on the political attempts for an acoustic occupation of public life and urban space, particularly the noisy clashes between the Nazi Sturmabteilung (SA) and left-aligned groups, and the utilisation of sound technologies and distribution channels in the late 1920s. I will then concentrate specifically on the Nazi Party’s standardisation of songs and ritual practices concerning Schlageter, and the twin principles of sonic omnipresence and spatial monumentality underpinning emergent Nazi commemorative practices. Finally, I will focus on the significance of gunshots as a persistent acoustic symbol for the “call” to national awaken-
ing, and reflect on the way the 1933 Schlageter commemoration attempts to use sound to perform reconfigured identity patterns within a reverberant urban site.

Auditory Perception and Affirmative Resonance

A variety of crowds attended large-scale rituals like the 1933 Schlageter festival for a range of reasons: political affiliation, social obligation, suspicion, curiosity or for free entertainment as a weekend outing. In this context, the silence of a crowd member might suggest refusal. Remaining silent could imply defiant opposition, but also silent agreement or being forcibly silenced by intimidation or violence. A similar difficulty arises if we try to determine vocal-corporeal participation as always necessarily constituting affirmation of the Nazi regime. The sounds of the crowd might not have been an expression of support for the regime as such, but rather reflected a common knowledge of traditional songs and melodies, or even oppositional voices and responses that were drowned out amidst the intense sounds of marchers, brass bands, the cheering and singing crowds. While there may have been varying degrees of participation and motivations for attending a large-scale Nazi festival, the phenomenological basis to the sonic rituals in Nazi events requires further consideration.

In Listening and Voice (1976), Don Ihde develops the notion of the “auditory imagination” as part of his general analysis of the dynamics between listening and voice, corporeal experience and cognition. In Ihde’s phenomenological approach, he sets out two important modes for the auditory imagination. The first mode occurs in the “dual polyphony” between hearing external sounds and one’s own inner speech. In Ihde’s view, the act of speaking prompts a second category, with a kind of dual polyphony or feedback between speaking and hearing oneself speak:

When I speak, if I attend to the entire bodily sense of speaking, I feel my voice resonate throughout at least the upper part of my body. I feel my whole head “sounding” in what I take to be sonic resonance. (158)

It is precisely in this resonance that Ihde detects a polyphony between the perceptual and imaginative, a co-presence of these two modalities that facilitates the individual’s auditory imagination. When it comes to musical sounds, Ihde argues that intense sounds may in fact preclude the possibility of thinking. As he explains, “bodily-auditory motion” in the presence of music can engage both one’s subject body and experiencing body, thus leading to “a temporary sense of the ‘dissolution’ of self-presence” (134). This temporary suspension of inner speech, Ihde says, results in “auditory interruptions of thinking” (158). According to Ihde, therefore, overwhelming sounds have the potential to disrupt thought patterns and one’s sense of self.

Ihde’s theoretical distinctions offer an important foundation for understanding individual listening processes and their engagement of the body and senses. The dynamic between voice and listening makes a strong case for the affirmative
qualities of speaking for subject formation. In turn, sounds can be generalised as
provoking affects and physical reactions in listeners. In the case of Nazi rituals,
there is clearly a relationship between sensory stimulation and manipulation. Yet
it would be too easy to generalise the vocal-corporeal involvement of participants
and crowds as automatically subjecting listeners to an entranced “musical ec-
stasy,” through the intense sounds and resonances of the 1933 Schlageter festival
(Ihde: 158). Overwhelming sounds do not automatically eradicate all possibili-
ties for thinking and self-awareness. Ihde’s too-easy classification might lead to
conclusions about listening as a passive and irrational sense, an assertion made
by media theorist Marshall McLuhan.

To fully untangle the complex orchestrations of propaganda during the
Schlageter memorial festival – creating mass resonances and forms of sensory
overstimulation in urban space – the concept of auditory imagination outlined
by Ihde remains too limited in scope. There are two vital aspects that remain
underexamined in his analysis. The first is that of space. If the success of Nazi
propaganda tactics and their establishment of new rites of national loyalty are
to be closely examined, it is essential to focus on the party’s utilisation of urban
space. Not only is space essential to establishing resonance, but it is only against
the various Nazi attempts to occupy, dominate and reconfigure social space, in
the spatial arrangements of large-scale rituals, that the significance of sound can
be properly understood.

The significance of spatial practices immediately raises the second, inter-
related issue of intersubjectivity. My concern is with the group dynamics and
power relations involved in large-scale rituals, with their sonic enactment of body
politics and disciplining of the senses. While Ihde’s interest in the polyphony of
sound refers primarily to individual auditory experiences, I will try to pay atten-
tion to state uses and representations of space as well as some of the rhythms,
interactions and configurations of multiple bodies in urban space (Lefebvre 1991,
2004). According to this taxonomy, bodily practices with sound and rhythm are
viewed as integral to establishing selfhood, patterns of identity and belonging,
and actively participating in the production of urban space. This is consistent
with Étienne Balibar’s argument that national community and the imagination
are configured through a network of apparatuses and practices that form the
individual as “homo nationalis” (2004: 12).

To expand Ihde’s concept of auditory imagination to include the significance
of body politics and collective spatial practices, I propose the notion of “affirma-
tive resonance.” Standard uses of resonance usually refer to the frequency of
vibrations within a particular system or area, to the richness, variety or inten-
sification of a sound, or the reactions it provokes among people. When com-
bined with the word affirmative – which suggests a certain optimism, making
an agreement, or being in favour of a particular cause or person – the phrase is
situated more concretely within social and political contexts. In my basic defini-
tion, affirmative resonance refers to a practice or event when a group of people
communally create sounds that resonate in a space, thus reinforcing the legiti-
macy of their group and its identity patterns. This phenomenon is given differ-
ent qualities when manifested through the sounds of multiple human voices, the
singing of songs, the playing of instrumental music, or with amplification by sound recording and transmission technologies. Affirmative resonances can be provoked by heard or imagined sounds, ranging from forms of acoustic presence to the acoustic symbols reproduced in public discourse and popular culture. They variously involve the voices, ears and bodies of listeners, and although they are predominantly experienced in the public spaces of the city, they can also occur within the domestic sphere, particularly through media use.

While early Nazi political strategies sought to achieve acoustic presence in urban space and the social imagination, I will contend that affirmative resonance was contingent on the possibility after 1933 to gather mass crowds and utilise media channels such as radio broadcasting. The loud cheers of massive crowds at official events not only comprised the affirmations of individual speaking-hearing feedback loops, but also the intensification of the sounds recorded by the microphone, projected through the loudspeaker system, and fed back again into the microphone. This feedback process is an evocative illustration of how affirmative resonance was attempted during the Nazi era. I will, however, necessarily take note of the challenges to fully achieving this goal in events like the Schlageter festival, often on the basis of logistical difficulties and technological malfunctioning.

But first the concept of affirmative resonance is central for identifying the increased intensity and effectiveness of Nazi propaganda strategies from the mid-1920s until 1933. From 1925 onwards, the desire to create mass events went hand in hand with the Nazi aim to transform themselves into a mass political movement. I will trace a general shift from examples of sparking the individual auditory imagination (as presence) to more comprehensive attempts at sensory overwhelming, with large-scale techniques of affirmative resonance sought out as strategies for creating an impression of omnipresence and inescapability.

**Sonic Brawling and Aesthetic Occupations of Public Space**

In my opinion, sound is more suggestive than the image. – Adolf Hitler

During the mid to late 1920s, both left and right-wing political groups aimed for visual presence in their strategies and battles for dominance of urban spaces, particularly during election periods. Billboard posters, leaflets, newspapers, flags, symbols, party uniforms and swastika badges constituted the main modes with which the National Socialist Party established itself visually throughout city streets and cultural contexts. These strategies are often attributed to the influence of French psychologist Gustave Le Bon on Hitler’s thinking about techniques of mass persuasion. In one of the frequently-cited quotes from Le Bon’s 1895 publication *The Crowd*, he made the claim that crowds can only think and be influenced through images, since “it is only images that terrify them or attract them or become motives of action” (2002: 35). This insistence on the suggestiveness of visual images has constituted a powerful legacy for contemporary accounts of Nazi propaganda and leadership principles, with visual forms frequently being the preferred cultural objects for analyses of National Socialism.
Turning to the role of sound in Nazi endeavours to figure in the popular imagination, it is also important to note Hitler’s stress on the “magic force of the spoken word.” We might say that sound is suited to the task of establishing presence since it does not respect borders between public and private life, and travels beyond the field of vision. Sounds can appear in the auditory imagination, even if their source cannot be seen. The instances of acoustic presence and acoustic conflict I will now examine are precursors to the large-scale and multiple forms of affirmative resonance that emerged in 1933. Such sounds, as I will show, may have sparked the auditory imagination of non-members or reinforced the identity of party members. Yet these examples do not completely succeed in producing paradigmatic shifts of community values and social allegiances due to the ongoing legal restrictions and voices of opposition to Nazism in the public sphere.

I will examine the various tactics pursued by the Nazis and Communist parties for attracting support and engagement through sensory-corporeal activities and spatial occupations of the urban environment. Despite theorist Walter Benjamin’s distinction between Communism (as aestheticising politics) and Fascism (as politicising aesthetics), there is certainly significant overlap in both of the parties’ struggle for urban dominance, which each drew on both visual and aural strategies.

The urban street is the quintessential site for the interactions of individuals and groups within the modern city. The street is “the location and medium for social encounters, the confrontation of classes, sexes, industry, generations […]” (Lindenberger 1995: 34). As media theorist Siegfried Zielinski notes, during the 1920s the street had wider repercussions, since not only political disputes, but also the various forms of commercial entertainment and diversion; whether cinema, variety, or the department stores for ordinary folk. (1999: 150)

Indeed, as one of the most vivid symbols of modernity in Germany, the street was invested with revolutionary potential in the wake of World War I. This sparked new forms of urban crowd behaviour and political participation, characterised by contemporary observers as a mania for speaking out (Redewut).

Drawing attention to the presence of sounds in 1920s public life is crucial given that “part of the clamour of modernity is a public sonic brawling, as urban space becomes a site of acoustic conflict” (Cloonan and Johnson 2002: 31, emphasis added). Sonic brawling, or battles over acoustic presence, figured in a number of ways in the early years of the Weimar Republic, which were marked by political revolt and attempted revolution. The 1919 left-wing Spartakist uprising was suppressed by the government and soldier groups (Freikorps). One year later, the attempted Kapp Putsch by right-wing groups led to a general strike by workers, with several months of open revolt eventually crushed by Freikorps and paramilitary police. These first years of the Republic were marked by high-profile political assassinations and various sabotage activities by extremist groups, par-
particularly in the occupied Rhineland where Schlageter was operating with the Freikorps paramilitary group “Operation Heinz” (Glombowski 1934).

It was also in this period that militant groups at opposite sides of the political spectrum developed the “clash” (Zusammenstoss) as a noisy, urban political strategy, ranging from spontaneous fights to organised attacks (Rosenhaft 1983: 3). The German word stresses not only the “blow” (Stoss) itself, but also the intersubjective qualities of the clash as a coming “together” (Zusammen). Historian Eve Rosenhaft emphasises the spatial dimension to this violent political strategy:

The threat and use of physical force, combined with the intransigent rhetoric used by the combatants, made it possible for the contest for party-political influence to develop into a struggle for direct physical control of space and institutions. (1983: 9)

Indeed, the control over space, particularly in working-class neighbourhoods and Communist strongholds, was one of the key points of contention. As Anthony McElligott notes, the violent activity of SA groups was a spatial process and they sought to establish their dominance over neighbourhoods, if not entire cities. Their aim, he says, was “to demoralize and conquer the working class in the very streets which made up their territory” (1983: 83). Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels affirmed this central tenet of the Nazis’ so-called Kampfzeit (period of struggle) during the 1920s, with their shared conviction that “whoever conquers the streets, conquers the state” (1931/1938: 18).

Members of the German Communist Party (KPD) often professed that their violence was out of self-defence, due to the sense of an invasion of their neighbourhoods, with local taverns taken over by SA members. Young men, in particular, often saw their position towards Nazi groups as one of self-defence with slogans encouraging violence, such as “Hit the Nazis when you see them!” or “Hit the fascists.” Particularly on weekends, raucous clashes took place in urban streets and marketplaces, which were tense locations for heated political debates, street battles and noisy group processions. These events, engaged in by both sides of the political spectrum, represented both an opportunity to increase support and provoke political opponents, often involving brass bands, marching and the singing of party songs in attempts to “sound out” urban locations, albeit on a fairly localised scale.

The localised nature of urban street fighting meant that it was not only the actual fighting that created the conditions for sonic brawling, but also the calls and slogans of bystanders and residents. Many of the noisy clashes occurred when one party or group tried to hold an event or procession that was subsequently interrupted by their opponents. Once a fight was underway, police on the scene could also be attacked and verbally abused for trying to intervene. Police officers could be called “bloodhounds” and “thugs,” and the vitriol usually reserved for SA groups might be redirected, with calls to “beat them to death!” The localised character of such violence can also be illustrated by the death of Horst Wessel, whose song lyrics were employed as the second national anthem after 1933.
Wessel, a violent SA-Sturmführer in Berlin, was murdered in his own home in 1930. It was due to a dispute with his landlady (the widow of a former KPD member) and his own involvement in prostitution (which also upset local prostitution rings) that communists and a pimp from his local neighbourhood collaborated in his murder (Rosenhaft 1983: 22-3). In his repeated commemoration through song and remembrance during the 1930s, Wessel was secured a sacred place in the canon of male “Nazi martyrs,” alongside Schlageter (Baird 1990).

Communist members also developed a number of strategies to counter the SA groups. Self-defence strategies were conceived as short-term reactions to enemy activity. While communists often saw violent activity as a necessary form of self-protection against fascism, it was not unusual that acts of “defence” provoked violence in more harmless situations (Rosenhaft 1983: 140). Two other forms of street activity concerned terror and policing. Terror towards right-wing members usually manifested itself in the form of raids and individual attacks, often in the private home or workplace, as in the case of Horst Wessel. Policing was a practice of monitoring the local neighbourhood for enemy activity, both visually and aurally.24

As early as 1925, Agit-Prop (“Agitation Propaganda”) theatre groups were also proposed by the Communist Party as noisy public propaganda tools and political weapons against fascism. In Düsseldorf there were two such groups: “Truppe im Westen” and the more programmatic “Nordwest ran.”25 They were mainly present at closed communist and worker events, but also became involved in election campaigning on the street, calling out party slogans, holding placards and singing worker and marching songs.26 By the last years of the Weimar era, however, communist activity was often prevented through local ordinances, and Agit-Prop groups were subjected to extensive police observation (Seelbach 1989: 87-9). By 1932, it had become too difficult for the groups to participate in any election campaign tours and almost all of their rehearsal and performance activities were prevented by new regulations, censorship and police surveillance. When performances did go ahead, they were often noisily disrupted by Nazi groups.27

Indeed, following bans on the “Red Front” (RFB) organisation around 1929, many communist groups were forced to operate in a limited and localised underground capacity. As Rosenhaft points out:

Although the Communist fighter might succeed in beating the Nazis locally, in the middle and longer terms the fight against the SA almost invariably brought them into confrontation with the police and the judiciary system – a fight which they could not hope to win. (213)

The immobilisation of Communist organisations and their supporters is indicated by the last months of the Weimar Republic, when the SA (and sometimes SS) were employed in some places as ancillary police and allowed to set up checkpoints in working-class areas (McElligott 1983: 89).28 By this time, the growing ranks of SA militaristic units had amplified the Nazis’ acoustic presence. The SA groups, with their rows of marching columns in uniform, attracted public fascination and created the impression of a stable rhythm and order. Their role as a
symbol of “the Volk on the march” assigned them a similar position to Schlageter as heroic freedom fighters and embodiments of a New Man. Indeed, a number of propaganda slogans and campaigns emphasised the role of the SA marching columns in the Nazis’ desire for a new national spirit and a national identity based on male heroism.

With the electoral success following 1930, the Nazi Party strove for further public attention through bold propaganda and campaigns characterised by strategies for a spatial occupation and even a “shrinkage” of public space (Strohmayer 1995: 150). In the lead up to the March 1932 elections, Hitler flew around Germany in a private plane for lecture events marketed with the slogan “Hitler over Germany.” Along with the posters and slogans for this media event, a book and propaganda film titled *Hitler über Deutschland* (Hitler over Germany, 1932) posited Hitler as a statesman looking down over the nation from an omnipresent position and achieving spatial dominance. During election campaigns, the Nazis also tried to heighten their acoustic presence by exploiting the new opportunities made available for record album releases. After 1928, the party began to distribute songs as commodities for consumption, with record releases of militaristic and party songs, along with Hitler’s “Appell an die Nation” (Call to the Nation), which was released and sold prior to the 1932 elections. This pattern demonstrates a growing presence of the Nazi Party in the public’s auditory imagination, made possible through mass-produced recordings of songs and speeches and the newly emerging late Weimar period publicity system, based on new configurations of popularity and publicity.

In 1932, the Nazis’ use of media distribution channels took another turn, with the decision to use *Lautsprecherwagen*, which were purpose-built vans with loudspeakers attached to the outside. These Siemens & Halske vans were rented out during election campaigns, as a means for attracting the attention of citizens with Nazi speeches, songs and party slogans (Paul 1992: 198). This represents an expansion of the principle of acoustic presence and resonance, since it enabled a significant intensification of sounds in support of the party. These loudspeaker vans opened up the possibility for penetrating public and private spaces with amplified sounds. Loudspeaker vans also intensified urban forms of “acoustic conflict,” since the vans provided the party with the opportunity to achieve a mediated acoustic dominance in the city, with the potential to drown out the sounds of political opponents.

The Nazi Party was also particularly effective in developing distinctive acoustic symbols as strategies for heightening their urban presence. Party members began to use their own form of greeting from the early 1920s, which consisted of the mutual exchange of the greeting “Heil Hitler!” with a straight, raised right arm. The Nazi greeting was a mobilisation of the body and the senses, which gave the party a striking acoustic marker of their group identity in public life (Paul: 177). As a major mechanism for mass suggestion and appearing in the auditory imagination, the Hitler greeting operated as an indicator for the growing social presence of party supporters prior to 1933. In historian William McNeill’s words, the Hitler salute and greeting involved an “overt muscular expression of loyalty to the regime” (1995: 148). In response to the success of this acous-
tic symbol, left-wing parties unsuccessfully tried to establish their own symbolic greetings in the early 1930s. Some social democrats opted for “Freedom!” (Freiheit!), while other communists tried their luck with “Heil Moskow!” (Paul 1992: 176). These belated reactions to the Nazi greeting do not appear to have had a gestural dimension, and did not catch on with either the general public nor left-wing party members.

In sum, there are thus two general patterns in the creation of auditory presence. The first comprises the visual and acoustic markers of the Nazi Party, with their distinct greeting and marching through city streets. The synchronised footsteps of SA troops, in particular, provided a palpable symbol for soldierly discipline and rhythmic order, posited as an antidote to the chaos of the Weimar Republic. Secondly, these troops also maintained an ethos of warfare and fighting for the Nazi worldview, using sounds to mark out territories and delineate exclusionary identity patterns across urban spaces. The latter forms of acoustic conflict can be defined as contributing to the “landscapes of fear,” since the Nazis’ political programme was based on aggressive attacks on Communists and spectacles of public humiliation and violence against Jews (Tuan 1979). Indeed, SA units relied on “acoustic conflict” in noisy forms of intimidation and violence. Large groups would descend on communist areas or Jewish businesses to sing out aggressive songs and hate slogans such as “Jude verrecke!” (Jews, rot to death!).

As historian Rob K. Baum notes, modes of intimidation in local neighbourhoods occurred before 1933:

Gentile boys stationed at openings of “Jewish” alleys ensured that children entering were beaten. After making that decisive turn from the main street, it was clear that my mother was headed for the Jewish school, and from there she was stoned (and not necessarily only by children). My aunt remembers “fresh little boys yelling Juden-Stinker [stinking Jew] in the small street leading to the Jewish school.” (2006: 96)

In other words, the late Weimar years were marked by an increasing number of attacks and intimidation of Jews on city streets, which only escalated following January 1933. Such anti-Semitic activity drew on sound and spatial control as techniques of coercion, and reflected the creation of “racialised geographies” (McCann 1999).

The examples of acoustic presence and acoustic conflict I have presented here attest to the variety of ways that the Communist and Nazi parties respectively used sound to attract attention and penetrate the auditory imagination of supporters and non-members during the 1920s. Although there were many attempts at visual and acoustic occupations in public life – involving corporeal and spatial practices – the Nazi propaganda strategies discussed here do not represent the full spectrum of acoustic intensities, mass participation or organisational capacities attempted from 1933 onwards.

Indeed, until 1933, there were still various organised forces of opposition to Nazi groups. Yet within the Communist Party itself there remained much ambivalence about streetfighting as a political strategy. On the whole, as Rosenhaft
In what follows, I will analyse more closely how the Nazi Party tried to activate the public’s imagination with their use of songs, publicity channels and commemorative structures, with Schlageter as a case study for the early 1930s.

Publicising Songs, Institutionalising Schlageter

Fascism was not an alternative to commodity culture, but appropriated its most sophisticated techniques.

– Susan Buck-Morss (1989: 309)

I now turn to the Nazi Party’s standardisation of ritual events with organised sound, with a particular focus on the specific commemorative songs and events created in memory of Schlageter. This concerns the manner in which sensory overwhelming and spatial omnipresence provided the basis for attempts to create mass affirmative resonances in public spaces. Each of these elements was essential to the party’s appeals to the senses for promoting Volksgemeinschaft as an experience, and for realising the mass nature of their political movement. Indeed, with the increased profile of the Nazi Party as a major political force, attempts at acoustic presence and occupations of public life grew in intensity. One of the key methods with which the Nazi Party harnessed their growing ranks of supporters
in the late Weimar period was through fortnightly local gatherings, known as “Sprechabende” (speech evenings). In large cities these evening gatherings began to attract between one and five thousand people on a daily basis (Paul 1992: 126). The focus on speeches during these events reflected Joseph Goebbels’ assertion that the spoken voice was more effective than the written word, given that word-of-mouth would enable National Socialist propaganda to be “passed on and recited hundreds and thousands of times” (1931/1938: 18). This observation from Goebbels, as the key strategist for Nazi propaganda, attests to the emphasis placed on listening experiences of spoken voice and musical sounds as a means for generating enthusiasm for the party.

Sound, in other words, was an intrinsic part of the desire to orchestrate sensory experiences and facilitate the consumption of national mythology, such as that of nationalist martyrs like Schlageter. By the early 1930s, the Nazi Party had standardised their use of songs and Christian-liturgical style rituals during gatherings or large events, such as the “National Socialist Days of Celebration.”

The party used such events to form impressive commemorative traditions, appealing to participants with group experiences of singing, solemn ritual and emotional climaxes.

The standardisation of song and incorporation of Christian-liturgical elements in party rituals is illustrated by the 1932 publication of an instruction book by F.H. Woweries. In the book, Woweries offers the following prototype for the necessary procedures of a Nazi event programme: opening choral piece, poem recital or chant, choral song “Kein schön’re Tod der Welt,” a short speech, orchestra piece, a ceremony for new Hitler-Jugend members, an orchestra piece, a closing chant and a rendition of the Horst Wessel song. The structure of the programme alternates between song, music and spoken texts, between chorus, recitations and chants. Revolving around these various sonic rituals and forms of participation, such events also included the ceremonial induction of new youth members into the Volksgemeinschaft. At least two songs included in Woweries’ programme mourned the death of “fallen comrades” and idealised male heroism for the nation. These commemorative rituals, already established before 1933, provide a precedent for the sensory stimuli employed in Nazi events, reflecting the aim of performing group participation in the nation’s rebirth by means of organised sound.

In general, nationalistic songs and anthems, with their strong lyrics and bombastic melodies, are particularly useful for propaganda, given their ability to harness feelings of optimism and belonging. Indeed, popular music during World War I, too, had proven to be an effective source of political mobilisation in Germany (Watkins 2003: 213-26). One of the most popular tunes during the war was the song “Wacht am Rhein” (Watch on the Rhine), which locates the Rhine as historically German (rather than French) and personifies it as a brave soldier standing in defence of the national border. Due to the rich symbolism in the song lyrics appropriated in the post-war period, I will pay particular regard to songs written about Schlageter as forms of historical narration. Indeed, one of the most striking features of Schlageter myth is the way it was embedded into national significance through song and ritual practices leading up to 1933. Nazi
song practice was primarily based on the coupling of simple, emotive music with strong, unambiguous lyrics, often from well-known poems (Meyer 1977: 569). The decade following the end of World War I in 1918 was marked by the cultural influence of soldier poetry and prose, a trend I will now examine more closely with regard to the Schlageter myth and its institutionalisation through both commemorative forms and popular culture.

In the late Weimar period, former comrades and members of the nation-wide Schlageter-Gedächtnis-Bund (Schlageter memorial association) set about to rework well-known songs in Schlageter’s memory. Several of these melodies were World War I or soldier songs, including “Wacht am Rhein,” which were given new verses (Broderick and Klein 1999: 74). Among the numerous songs in circulation about Schlageter during the Weimar period was a new song written by Nazi propagandist Otto Paust, an editor for Joseph Goebbels’ Berlin party newspaper Der Angriff. While it is, of course, problematic to analyse the song lyrics translated into English and without the sounds of the melody, this “Song of the Lost Troops” provides insight into the mythologising of Schlageter’s death and its rendering as a significant national event:

Rhine, Ruhr and Palatinate (Pfalz). And – dungeon’s darkness,
Sentence and prison! Trouble, unable to rest –
Golzheimer Heath. Schlageter’s death.
Flaming blaze. Dawn! Do you remember?

The Third Reich’s first soldier!
The faith is directed at you! You were the living deed.
You are the Reich. You are the nation,
You are Germany’s faith, the son of the Volk.

The song performs a noticeable shift, moving from the despair about the prison sentence for Schlageter to his death at dawn as the scene of rebirth for the nation. The first stanza gives a short and stylised account of Schlageter’s death and addresses Germans with the question “do you remember?” to prompt remembrance in the listener. The posing of this remembrance as a question suggests a rhetorical test of the listener’s patriotism, asking if they too, like Schlageter, are prepared to make sacrifice for the nation. The second stanza addresses Schlageter as the “Third Reich’s first soldier,” and a symbol for Germany’s struggle in the face of defeat and occupation after World War I. The song, then, situates Schlageter both as a myth of origin and “the son of the Volk.” In this way, it becomes easier to discern how such songs were drawn on for rituals and rhetorics about unconditional loyalty to the nation, a discourse that National Socialists simultaneously used to reposition Communists and Social Democrats as unpatriotic traitors (Fischer 2003: 2).

Two other significant Nazi appropriations of traditional melodies included the seventeenth-century folksong “Kein schöner Tod der Welt” and the popular song “Zu Mantua in Banden,” written in 1831. The historical references in “Zu Mantua in Banden” represent a striking parallel with the Schlageter myth.
The lyrics to this melody were written about Andreas Hofer, who fought against Napoleon’s French armies in the early 1800s. Hofer was arrested and killed by a French firing squad, and this resemblance to the Schlageter story is emphasised in the lyrics of the “Schlageter Song” (Track 1):

With a hollow drum roll  
To Benrath on the Rhine,  
A thriving life went  
To an abrupt end.  
Albert Schlageter, German hero  
French anger cut you down  
You died for Germany’s honour.

They forced you to your knees  
Out of baseness and malice,  
The wish to die standing,  
Was dismissed with a sneer.  
Twelve shots cracked at once,  
Comrades, let it be known in the German Reich  
Here fell an officer, a German officer.

With aching hearts  
And suppressed anger  
We saw your life end  
And the pouring of precious blood  
With your unbroken male pride  
Staying as stable as German oak-wood, in a mighty heroism.

German Andreas Hofer,  
You pearl of German loyalty  
Your lustre will never fade,  
Will always be renewed.  
All of Germany swears, despite its woes,  
To show their gratitude for your martyrdom:  
Revenge will be mine!  

These lyrics, written during the 1920s, represent a similar attempt to the previous example of Paust’s mythologising of Schlageter as a patriot and hero. The song begins by describing solemn drum rolls (described as “hollow,” and thus empty and pointless) and the twelve shots of the French firing squad. These are two important illustrations of the acoustic symbols used frequently in the poems, songs and rhetorics about Schlageter’s death. These symbols were accorded further significance in the lead up to 1933, as the gunshots of the French military were commonly portrayed as a call to arms prompting Germany’s so-called national awakening. The second stanza positions Schlageter’s heroic behaviour against
the depravity of the French military. His example as a manly ideal and German soldier is then compared to the longevity and dependability of an oak tree in the third stanza – as upright, unyielding and principled. In the final stanza, the protagonist (addressed as “you” in the previous stanzas) is overlaid with the persona of Andreas Hofer. This doubling up of these two figures integrates Schlageter as heir to a long, historical lineage of male German patriots, thus reconfirming his role both as the source of a “myth of origin” and a projected future for the model of a New Man under National Socialism.

The final part of the song functions as a pledge of loyalty, ending with the theme of revenge, and stressing the necessity for action. In this manner, nationalistic songs represented an important mobilising force for the notion of an ethnic-based Volksgemeinschaft. The lyrics place semantic emphasis on action as central to the Nazis’ own objectives as a political Bewegung (literally, “movement”). They also repeatedly appeal to the auditory imagination when citing military gunshots as the acoustic symbols and triggers for Germany’s national rebirth, a theme I will explore in further detail later in this chapter.

This “Schlageter Song” was part of a further consolidation and institutionalisation of Schlageter’s memory. Its lyrics were submitted by a former comrade of Schlageter to the Düsseldorf Historical Museum (Stadtmuseum), as part of a compilation begun in 1931 to create a “Schlageter Corner” in their permanent collection. From 1932 onwards, a Nazi-dominated team also began preparations for a “Schlageter-Gedächtnis-Ausstellung” (Schlageter memorial exhibition), which was opened during the 1933 festival in Düsseldorf. The calls to memorialise Schlageter’s memory had already intensified after 1927, when a prominent circle of Düsseldorf citizens, including Catholics and conservatives, called for donations to their “Ausschuss für die Errichtung eines Schlageter-Nationaldenkmals” (Committee for the Erection of a National Schlageter Memorial). The committee also lobbied the German Chancellery throughout 1927 and 1928 to give financial assistance for building a memorial at the location of Schlageter’s death at the Golzheimer Heath. However, German Chancellor Wilhelm Marx (Catholic Centre Party) expressed concerns at the nationalist and anti-French motivations of the committee, given the fragile diplomatic ties with France.

The monument was finally built in 1931, some fifty metres from the site of Schlageter’s death, according to plans by Vienna-based architect Clemens Holzmeister, a professor at the Düsseldorf Art Academy. The monument was unveiled at the annual commemoration event marking the eighth anniversary of Schlageter’s death in May 1931. The design was overwhelmingly dominated by a towering iron cross, at a height of thirty metres, with a below-ground crypt including a memorial tablet listing over one hundred dead men from the Ruhr resistance to the French occupation (Figure 1).

By examining this event and its ritual organisation in some detail, I will consider how sound and space were drawn on to produce a sense of order and regularity. The 1931 memorial event, co-organised by the Düsseldorf city council and the Schlageter memorial committee, was held on Sunday, 23 May. The event began with a call for discipline and quiet in the area surrounding the memorial site (von Burgsdorff 1931). The various national-conservative groups participating
were given designated meeting points around the northern edges of the city centre, along with instructions for the various marching routes along main roads.\textsuperscript{51}

In the official programme booklet, a diagram indicated how each group would enter the memorial area (Figure 2).\textsuperscript{52}

The regional radio station Westdeutscher Rundfunk (Werag) perceived the main events to be important enough for live broadcasts from Düsseldorf. The station broadcast the commemoration ceremony from 4pm, when all of the official groups and an estimated crowd of around 50,000 spectators gathered at the memorial site and the Düsseldorf Stahlhelm orchestra played the Ludwig van Beethoven hymn “Herr mein Gott ich bau’ auf Dich.”\textsuperscript{53} At this point, speeches were given by Dr Max Schlenker (Schlageter committee), Düsseldorf Lord Mayor Dr Robert Lehr and Duisburg-Hamborn Mayor Dr Karl Jarres.\textsuperscript{54} A choir and orchestra performed the “Altniederländischen Dankgebet” (Old Dutch Prayer of Thanks), before a speech was made addressing the German youth. Next, the orchestra played “Ich hatt’ einen Kameraden” (I once had a comrade), while wreaths were laid at the foot of the cross. Finally the former German chancellor Dr Wilhelm Cuno stressed that the resistance to the Ruhr occupation had comprised people from all classes, religions and party affiliations. After this final speech, all participants joined in to sing the German national anthem.\textsuperscript{55}
While the memorial culture of the Weimar period was nationalist in orientation, speakers such as Lehr and Cuno tried to stress Schlageter’s relevance above party political divisions. This was an attempt to prevent an appropriation of the memorial for political manipulation by right-wing groups, who also claimed the Ruhr resistance as their own achievement. The Nazi Party was not directly involved in the organisation of the 1931 event, yet archival photos do suggest that SA and Hitler-Jugend (Hitler Youth) groups held ceremonies at the original gravestone site in the period around 1928. In any case, the commemorative elements utilised by the broader nationalist-conservative milieu during the Weimar era could be easily appropriated and refashioned by the Nazi regime after 1933.

The Schlageter memorial site was discursively positioned as an ideal location for ritual gatherings, and described in 1937 as further consolidating “the feeling of predestined solidarity of the new Volksgemeinschaft.” Two aspects of the memorial’s visual appearance have been described as suited to the Nazis’ later mythologising of Schlageter. Firstly, the Christian overtones of the cross fitted the Nazi use of Schlageter as a Christ-like symbol of heroic sacrifice. Secondly, the site had a concrete construction in front of the cross that was partially below-ground and circular in shape. This, according to historian Robert R. Taylor, had

FIG. 2: Floor plan indicating the organisation of various groups at the unveiling of the monument [May 1931]. StaD xxiii/739, Stadtarchiv Düsseldorf.
the desired effect of suggesting an inclusive congregation of the people, spatially reconfigured as “a community, the people gathered within” (1974: 191-2).

While these assertions might lead to the conclusion that sound and space worked seamlessly with each other, the site was not typically “Nazi” in its spatial configuration nor did it offer an ideal acoustics. To begin with the acoustics of the site, the memorial site was on the far northern outskirts of Düsseldorf. Unlike the marching through the resonant spaces of (often-narrow) city streets or events in enclosed halls, the sounds at the Schlageter site could more easily dissipate due to the low-lying surrounding fields and run-down garden plots. The need to upgrade the acoustic possibilities offered by the site is indicated by the organizers’ decision to hire out a Lautsprecherwagen from Siemens & Halske for the 1931 event. While the archival correspondence does not comment specifically on sound quality, the Schlageter committee assured the Siemens & Halske company that the various political groups and associations involved in the ceremony also planned to have large events at the site in future, for which they would require Siemens & Halske equipment. The Schlageter committee, moreover, was not able to pay the full fee of 750 marks, since they claimed to be 12,000 marks in debt. This suggests the relative inexperience of the organizers in hosting a large-scale, outdoor memorial event.

Despite the appeal of the claim that the spatial qualities and visual design of the Schlageter monument were inherently suited for Nazi purposes, there is significant evidence to suggest otherwise. Art historian Christian Fuhrmeister (1998) has detected an ambivalence towards the monument design (particularly the cross shape after 1933), which was often superimposed with the swastika or text in visual representations, such as postcards and book covers. Architect Holzmeister’s circular design, too, was in keeping with his 1920s modernist style, which can be seen in his numerous commissions for churches in this period. Due to his involvement with Catholic political groups, however, Holzmeister lost his position at the Düsseldorf Art Academy in 1933 and was later placed under Gestapo surveillance. After 1933, as Fuhrmeister notes, Holzmeister’s name was rarely associated with the memorial site (1998: 66-7). The ambivalence towards the monument was not only based on its physical appearance and architectural design, but also its awkward geographical location. A hand-drawn ground plan for the 1933 commemoration indicates that the memorial location was not necessarily suited for the geometric organisation of crowds, and parts of the crowd and the memorial were separated by a tramline (Figure 3). The angle of the monument, moreover, was not aligned to either north-south or east-west axes, or in a direct relation to the Rhine River. The perception that the memorial site needed to be properly established as a national landmark and integrated into a more monumental environment led to an architectural design competition in 1934. The competition, hosted by the Düsseldorf City Council, also called for a large-scale exhibition site to be built along the northern banks of the Rhine River. This exhibition, Schaffendes Volk (literally, “Productive People”), would foreground the economic achievements of Hitler’s “Four Year Plan,” overseen by Hermann Göring.
During the competition process, there was some discussion in the local press about the existing and potential problems of the site. For instance, an article in the *Düsseldorfer-Nachrichten* in May 1934 notes how the various building plans foresaw the expansion of the area to include a marching ground for 300,000 people, a sports arena, and an open-air amphitheatre for 100,000 people. Nevertheless, the author says, the creation of a marching ground would require the re-routing of tramlines and through-roads. The *Düsseldorfer-Stadtanzeiger*, too, noted some planning problems, due to certain areas overlapping with arterial roads intended as connections to the national Autobahn route. This aside, the author praises the monumental potential of the plans with the inclusion of open areas, broad streets, greenery, a model township (*Schlageter-Siedlung*) and the large exhibition area.

The anxieties about the monumental appearance of the memorial were also expressed in an article by Düsseldorf engineer E. L. Wehner in December 1934. Wehner acknowledges that the Schlageter site was difficult due to the size and openness of the surrounding area, and asserts that such large-scale projects need to be managed by town-planning experts. Wehner argued that the statue’s cross was quite thin and not high enough to create a monumental impression over the entire area, since the 1931 design was meant to be a “purely local affair” (*rein örtliche Angelegenheit*). In the author’s view, the planning of a “Schlageter...
Forum” around the site should not have a long, 1.5 kilometre walkway, as this might cause the monument to disappear from sight altogether (Wehner 1934: 795). Indeed, the risk of reduced visibility had already led to a 1933 commission for electrics company AEG to install several strong spotlights for the monument and its crypt, which were considered too dark for evening events (“Das Schlageter-Kreuz” 1933: n. pag.).

The 1937 Schaffendes Volk exhibition eventually incorporated the monument into a planned and large-scale construction project. Despite ongoing concerns, the new plans maintained the circular theme of Holzmeister’s original design, framing the space with grass and greenery, some of which also formed a large circular pattern. At the same time, the “Schlageter Forum” design sought to geometrically organise those within the space, with a columned entranceway of tall flagposts leading in a straight line from the monument to the centre of the exhibition grounds (Figure 4). This monumental principle did not resolve the original acoustics problems entirely, but the exhibition structures did mean that the site was more enclosed in a built-up area with potentially more reverberant acoustics.

The exhibition itself attracted seven million visitors over a period of five months, and its hundred-odd constructions were conceived according to the official English-language brochure in terms of live events and entertainment:

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**FIG. 4**: Overview of the planned walkway construction in front of the Schlageter monument, commissioned by the Düsseldorf city council, 1934. The memorial was in the northwestern side of the Nordfriedhof cemetery and the Rheinstadion is in the top-left corner. Fotosammlung, Stadtarchiv Düsseldorf.
The exhibition not only sought to foreground economic and industrial achievements, but also to display new technological attractions, not unlike the showcases at the annual German radio and television exhibitions in Berlin (Bressler 2009). Live television feeds were set up in several locations, along with live wireless correspondence with German sea captains, the latest developments in audio tape recording (AEG Magnetophone) and advancements in electrical light displays and water fountains. Despite the significant expenses budgeted for the acoustic requirements of a state-of-the-art sound-film cinema, the acoustics of the entire exhibition space were described in 1937 as problematic, particularly in the music pavilion, which needed rebuilding on this basis (‘Düsseldorfer Brief’ 1937: n. pag.).

Indeed, although it can be said that Schlageter’s memory and significance were consolidated in Düsseldorf’s urban landscape during the 1930s, certain problems remained with the memorial and its northern location, while the Schaffendes Volk exhibition also led to some further disappointments for both organisers and visitors (Schäfers 2001). For some members of the Nazi Party, the exhibition was too commercial and criticised internally for its advertising costs and encouragement of consumption, rather than creating fundamental experiences akin to the annual Nuremberg party rallies or the annual “honouring of the dead” (Totenehrung) in Munich. This perceived tension between an ideology of organic experience and the party’s mediated propaganda forms and modern publicity strategies is a theme I will return to in subsequent chapters.

While the Nazi Party was not directly involved in the 1931 Schlageter event, its members had already recognised a principle of spatial occupation and omnipresence as intrinsic to achieving a sensory overwhelming in party events and public space. During the late Weimar years, the party’s standardisation of ritual elements drew on a pre-existing Christian symbolic framework, elevating party gatherings to the status of an “event.” In the case of Schlageter, official memorial groups, museum collections and the memorial site itself were integral to the overall institutionalisation and canonisation of Schlageter as a Nazi martyr. Musical song and singing practices not only played a key role in the narration of the Schlageter myth, but also in the circulation and popularisation of the Nazis’ nationalist cause. After 1933, the acoustics and spatial location of the Schlageter site was identified as needing an upgrade if it was truly going to be a site of national pilgrimage (Wallfahrtsort). This bears out the necessity for sound and space to work together in order to produce a sense of order and monumentality, let alone reverberant mass rites of national loyalty.
In what follows, the 1933 memorial events will be positioned in terms of the exchange between nationalistic eulogising, body politics and spatial practices. In particular, I focus on how Schlageter’s death was emphasised as the awakening for the nation, facilitated by the acoustic symbol of military gunshots. This requires a consideration of how the Nazi Party, once in power, drew on sound and space within public events and cultural production. I will outline a number of Nazi ritual events held around the same period as the Schlageter festival, before reflecting on attempts to orchestrate large-scale techniques of affirmative resonance. The importance of scale in successfully producing affirmative resonance will be emphasised, since this phenomenon would seem to be dependant on the volume produced by the large crowds gathered and enabled by the amplification of sound systems.

**The Call for National Awakening**

Writing in his 2002 memoirs, historian Eric Hobsbawm conceded that he could no longer remember many details of his own participation in a large Communist political demonstration in Berlin during early 1933. But what he clearly remembered was the experience of collective singing with “intervals of heavy silence,” his trance-like state and the exalted feeling that “we belonged together” (74). As Hobsbawm recalled:

> Participation in a mass demonstration at a time of great public exaltation […] implies some physical action – marching, chanting, slogans, singing – through which the merger of the individual in the mass, which is the essence of the collective experience, finds expression. (73)

In his description, Hobsbawm picks out the physical movement of marching through the city, and the shifts between speech, song and silence as key factors for drawing individuals into inclusive mass rituals, characterised by spatial and bodily practices. While the experiences described by Hobsbawm were situated within a specific Communist Party context, this example illustrates how group rituals in urban space can contribute to the collective performance of a shared identity.71

Indeed, as William McNeill has suggested, there is a trans-historical dimension to the social phenomenon he terms as “muscular bonding” (1995: 1-11). The two key kinaesthetic practices he identifies within this broader field include festive village dance and the (military) drill. In the case of the former, McNeill argues that historically, community-wide celebration and dance were important for “maintaining everyday routines and all forms of cooperative behaviour needed for the effective conduct of community affairs” (38). The status of all-inclusive festivals as a means of venting frustration and encouraging social cohesion is a theme I will develop in the subsequent analysis of carnival and the festivalisation of everyday life in Chapter Two. McNeill’s latter category concerns the collective experience of marching with co-ordinated rhythmic movement, often to the beat of (military) music, which has been practised across various historical
periods and cultures. What such experiences of keeping in time create, McNeill argues, are “muscular manifestations of group solidarity” on the basis of individual boundary loss (10).

Against this background, the example offered by Hobsbawm shows common characteristics with the collective experience of feeling united through vocal participation and shared physical activity. Those participating alongside Hobsbawm were most likely Communist Party members and supporters. While they were coming together in a period of anxiety following the Nazi seizure of power, it is likely that they already identified with the Communist Party or as members of the working class. The examples of “muscular bonding” I will now consider concern large public events staged by the Nazi Party in the first months of 1933. These mass events are not only revealing, I argue, as a reinforcing of the group identity of existing party members, but also for establishing a broader social legitimation and popular participation in the projected Volksgemeinschaft, proposed as a panacea to class divisions in German society. For example, on the day of the Nazi takeover, on 30 January 1933, one million supporters took to the streets of Berlin in a nighttime procession with torchlights, which proceeded past the German Chancellery and through the triumphal archway of the Brandenburg Gate. This supposedly spontaneous performance by uniformed party members, also broadcast on German radio, provided an important sonic assertion of the new status quo and encapsulated the contemporary slogan “Germany awakes!” (Deutschland erwacht!).

A number of official rituals calling for “national awakening” were organised in the four months prior to the Schlageter festival – as public holidays and occasions for whole-day broadcasting programmes under the new Nazi radio administrations (Diller 1980; Bernard 1997). Following a disappointing result of 43.9 percent for the Nazi Party in the national elections on 5 March 1933, the radio medium was identified as an acoustic means for “drumming up” (zusammentrommeln) the remaining votes (or “voices”) of the people (Volksstimmen) (Goebbels 1971: 93). One of the first official opportunities for such a large-scale public ritual was Der Tag von Potsdam (Day of Potsdam), held on 21 March 1933. This mass event was used to symbolically replace the annual German Reichstag celebrations and appropriate the key ceremonial site of the former Prussian monarchy (the Garnison Church). On 1 May 1933, the international workers’ day or May Day was similarly appropriated and transformed into Der Tag der Arbeit (National Day of Labour), an occasion described as performing the symbolic destruction of the German labour movement (Elfferding 1987).

Organising such events and ensuring their affirmative resonance was not straightforward. In the case of May Day in Berlin, the complexity of acoustically staging large-scale mass events was emphasised in an article published by Nazi radio ideologue Eugen Hadamovsky (1933: n. pag.). Not surprisingly, Hadamovsky idealises the achievements of those involved in the planning of this event, which involved an estimated one million participants in the open fields at Berlin-Tempelhof. Nonetheless, he also notes the difficulties in setting up grandstands, flagposts, lighting and one hundred water-proof loudspeaker towers, as well as electrical lines for radio and telephone operations. Using what were supposedly
the largest loudspeakers available at this time, the sound needed to reach listeners up to two kilometres away from the party speakers. Due to the unprotected nature of the site, Hadamovsky notes that precautions would be taken to ensure audibility in the case of an easterly or westerly wind, along with multiple cable groups in case of power failure (1933: n. pag.). Clearly, the symbolic importance of these large-scale events meant that no expense was spared for the organisation, which extended to dress rehearsals for the police and coordinators, for the loudspeaker and telephone systems, and for pre-arranged radio scripts.73

Another major event calling for “national awakening” in this short period was the national public holiday created for Adolf Hitler’s birthday on 20 April 1933. After a whole day of national celebrations for Hitler’s forty-fourth birthday in Berlin, the highlight of the evening was the theatre premiere and radio broadcast of the new play, “Schlageter,” with high-ranking party officials in attendance.74 The play, which was written and staged by Hanns Johst, used every opportunity to portray Schlageter as a Nazi hero and “first soldier of the Third Reich.”75 Even in the final death scene at dawn, Johst put the propaganda slogan “Germany Awake!” into Schlageter’s mouth. Positioned upstage with his back to the audience, Schlageter faced the guns of the firing squad (which were also pointed at the audience) (Figure 5). In this climactic scene, with sound effects of French car engines and military horns, and headlights shining towards the audience, the Schlageter character’s last words were (Track 2):

Germany!
One last word! One wish! Command!
Germany!!!
Awake! Catch flame!!
Burn! Burn beyond imagining!!
And you… give fire!!76

At this moment the French military gunshot sounds rang out, and the bright spotlight shining in the theatregoers’ eyes went out, before leaving the audience in the dark silence.

The gunshots represented an important acoustic moment for the audience members, with the question of patriotism ringing in their ears. In the silence that ensued, German audiences were left with the image of Schlageter’s sacrifice, and to think about the necessity of taking action and fighting for the nation. After this pause, the applauding audience joined in song for the two national anthems (Strobl 2005: 308). Not only the acoustic symbol of the gunshots reconfirmed Schlageter’s importance, but also the resonance created by the collective singing of both national anthems. This was undoubtedly the case in the vocal-gestural participation of theatregoers, but also for the radio audience, for whom the dramatic visual staging was communicated through the verbal imagery of flames and the sound effects of gunshots and silence.

The notion of gunshots as a “call” for national awakening had been popularised ever since Schlageter’s death in 1923.77 Johst’s play went on to tour almost every major German city, with its portrayal of national rebirth after the Weimar
era apparently striking a chord with audiences. Even though several reviewers were critical of Johst’s patchwork of dramatic styles or the clichéd portrayal of Social Democrats as traitors, most press reports stressed Schlageter’s relevance for the present as a model for German patriotism based on taking action (whether in the form of physical movement or explicit violence).78

Hitler’s birthday celebrations in 1933 demonstrate how, once in power, the Nazi regime expanded on their propaganda strategies, using specific forms of acoustic symbols and spatial presence to appeal to the auditory imagination. On the one hand, lengthy radio broadcasts replicated the acoustic symbols and sensory stimulation of the songs, sounds and heightened anticipation of the public events for radio listeners at home (and their status as earwitnesses). These broadcasts are illustrative of the importance placed on bridging private and public spaces through radio and other media, insofar as “networking private and public experience within an expanded frontier of national space became an important political point of legitimation and control” (Bathrick 1997: 4). On the other hand, by appropriating familiar public events and pre-existing knowledge of songs for collective singing, the Nazis could facilitate the crowd’s participation in singing, chants and sound-making more generally. Even if crowd members felt like autonomous subjects engaged in acts of self-expression, the elements of these speaker and crowd encounters marked the merging of “expression and repression [within] the same mechanism” (Koepnick 2002: 46).
Ultimately, through the realisation of sensory overwhelming and spatial omnipresence, these party rituals provided a template for the creation of affirmative resonances that could sound out the entire public space of the city, saturating the ears and bodies of the people. Moreover, these ritual practices supported new visualisations of urban space, with its “Endlose Straßen” (endless streets) and “Ewige Straßen” (eternal streets), replacing an earlier characterisation of “die freudlose Gasse” (the joyless alley or street) in the economic crises of the 1920s and early 1930s. Such positive notions of streetscapes were boosted by plans for a national Autobahn network, which performed the additional function of promising to network the nation in the form of transport routes (Strommer 1982; Vahrenkamp 2010).

The expanded significance of acoustic presence, acoustic symbols and corporeal-spatial practices can be identified in the three-day Schlageter festival held in Düsseldorf from Friday to Sunday, 26-28 May 1933. Like the other national festivals in early 1933, the attendance of crowd members was in part obligatory, such as for the eighty thousand local Hitler-Jugend members. For most of the other crowd members, however, participation was voluntary, since the festival was popularised and normalised as a tourist event, with souvenirs and commodities for consumption. In the lead up to the festival, German radio stations broadcast numerous radio plays and biographical accounts about Schlageter. In Düsseldorf, visitors could attend the opening of Johst’s “Schlageter” play, which was also adapted as radio play or “martyr play,” alongside “Horst Wessel” by Hanns Heinz Ewers and Paul Beyers (Cuomo 1989: 49-50). The focus on both of these martyrs was reinforced in screenings of the film Blutendes Deutschland (1932), which restaged the story of Schlageter and the rise of National Socialism through newsreel footage. The censorship card for the film indicates that Schlageter’s death was framed here too as “an enflamed sign for the re-awakening of the German people.”

Blutendes Deutschland created a familiar conspiracy narrative with its first act presenting Germany’s World War I loss as due to the lies of the press, unreliable politicians and a weak home front, and resulting in “Red Terror” and street battles. The second act cites Schlageter’s death as the mechanism enabling the nation’s rebirth, symbolised by trumpet sounds and represented onscreen with warships, planes, and marching National Socialists and Hitler-Jugend. The third act maintains the marching theme but also connects Horst Wessel’s 1930 death to the risk posed by the communist “Red Front” (RFB). The question posed to the viewer is “Do you hear the admonitions of the dead?” This rhetorical device poses the “calls” of the World War I dead as coextensive with those Nazis who died during the Weimar era. Another depiction of National Socialists playing trumpets then provided an acoustic cue for the increasing successes of the NSDAP, visualised onscreen by marching columns, leader speeches, flags, crowd applause and Hitler’s appointment as chancellor. In other words, these newsreel scenes created the dramatic closure of the fourth act by presenting the symbolic repertoire most commonly employed in large events during the first months of 1933.
In the case of the Schlageter festival in Düsseldorf, the first day (26 May) marked the official opening of the Schlageter memorial museum and exhibition, which went on to tour other major cities competing to participate in the popular enthusiasm for Schlageter-related events. In addition to the postcards and pins available for sale, a significant number of biographies and commemorative books further encouraged the consumption of this national myth. One example of the insistence on Schlageter’s national significance can be found in the afterword to a 1934 collection of his personal letters, edited by Friedrich Bubenden. Bubenden emphasises the simplicity of Schlageter’s prose, before situating his story in acoustic terms. Schlageter is positioned as a true patriot who listened to “the call” of the unknown soldier in post-war Berlin and who could hear “the subterranean rumbling [...] of the Ruhr” during the anti-French resistance. Towards the end of his text, Bubenden stresses that Schlageter was an example to the German people in his devotion to the nation, as “a man of action and not of words,” who continued struggling, rather than “sinking into non-militant contemplation.”

The motifs of the call for national awakening and the creation of a Volksgemeinschaft were performed through a number of acoustic means during the Schlageter festival itself. On each of the three festival days, different uniformed groups with thousands of members marched through the streets of the city. By the first day, the Ehrenfeuer (memorial flame) had already been burning at the memorial site for five days. A national memorial broadcast for all school children took place between 10 and 11am, with a radio play about Schlageter written for the occasion. That evening, at 7pm, the Westdeutscher Rundfunk in Cologne broadcast a special edition of the daily “Stunde der Nation” (Hour of the Nation), in honour of Schlageter. Immediately following this classical concert programme, the “Schlageter” radio play (based on Johst’s production) was broadcast from Berlin until 9.30pm. Meanwhile, in Düsseldorf, one hundred noisy aeroplanes circled over the city at 5pm, followed by the unveiling of a bronze bust and plaque in the district court, where Schlageter had been sentenced in 1923 (Knauff 1995: 174). Later that evening, the Schlageter memorial group arranged a concert event for long-time party members in the Düsseldorf Tonhalle (concert hall), with a chorus singing a range of songs from Richard Wagner, World War I and folk repertoires (Baird 1990: 37). This programme bears out the prominent role played by both radio and the memorial events in staging a crossover between solemn rites and lighter entertainment forms in order to enhance the desired effect of affirmative resonance.

The second day of the festival (27 May), titled the “Schlagertag der Hitler-Jugend” (Schlageter Day for the Hitler Youth), involved eighty thousand local school children in a march to the memorial site in Golzheim (Baird 1990: 37). After assembling with torchlights and flags at 9pm, the youth groups marched through the city to the Schlageter memorial, where they engaged in a ceremony involving hymns, brass bands and speeches. The boys and girls were positioned as the new members and future of the German Volksgemeinschaft, and Schlageter was projected as the embodiment of the role that youth could play in the rebirth of the nation. Furthermore, the enthusiasm for marching as part of the Volksgemeinschaft generated in many of its young members has been described in one
memoir as something that “pulled us along – namely, the compact columns of marching youths and waving flags, eyes looking straight ahead, and the beat of drums and singing. Was it not overwhelming, this fellowship?” For some younger members, the intensity of these mass experiences and the ubiquity of Schlageter’s persona earned him a status similar to that of contemporary pop idols.

The last day of the festival, on Sunday (28 May), involved the most impressive performances of affirmative resonance. The day began at 6am with a “Großes Wecken,” a large reveille through the city, designed to wake up all civilians in the early hours of the morning. While such sounds might be seen as in keeping with a general military music tradition, I would suggest that these dawn sounds offered a re-enactment of the gunshots at Schlageter’s death, literally performing the acoustic “wake-up call” that would prompt both remembrance and the awakening of the nation. During the course of this morning, one hundred and eighty-five thousand uniformed participants marched through the streets, reordering them and sounding them out, amidst the cheers and participation of the crowds.

Following the arrival of all the marchers at the Schlageter memorial and the positioning of party leaders and special guests within the hierarchically divided space, a choir began to sing Franz Schubert’s hymn “Heilig ist der Herr” accompanied by one hundred Stahlhelm musicians. Amidst this religious sentiment, two priests (Catholic and Protestant) mounted a risen platform covered in swastika flags, from which they each gave a speech about Schlageter to the assembled masses, before the “Altniederländischen Dankgebet” (Old Dutch Prayer of Thanks) was played (Knauff 1995: 184). Shortly after 11am, Prussian Interior Minister Hermann Göring gave a forty-five minute speech, broadcast across the whole country, in which he cited the same acoustic symbol of the gun shots that had made such an impact at the premiere of Johst’s “Schlageter” play a few weeks previously:

When the shots rang out ten years ago at dawn at this spot, they were heard through the German night and awakened the nation in her weakness and humiliation. In those days the memory of Schlageter inspired us and gave us hope. We refused to believe that his sacrifice had been in vain. Schlageter demonstrated in the way he died that the German spirit could not be destroyed. Schlageter, you can rest in peace. We have seen to it that you were honoured here and not betrayed like your two million comrades. As long as there are Schlageters in Germany, the national will live.

In this speech, the acoustic symbol and imagined sound of Schlageter’s death were positioned as the spark reigniting the nation and prompting its awakening, as the precondition for a new Volksgemeinschaft. Amidst multiple sounds and activations of affirmative resonance, Göring’s strategic use of the acoustic symbol of gunshots was consistent with the broader attempt to transform a deeply divided society, previously characterised as a “people of music,” into an “acoustic völkisch community” (Trommler 2004: 68).
A German-language newsreel (Deulig-Tonwoche) from 1933 provides one of the few sonic impressions of this speech. Following a montage sequence of the commemorative events, the final section of Göring’s speech provides insight into the sonic and spatial qualities of the event (Track 3):

Comrades [echo, pause]. German men and women [pause]. [...] There are some from back then who are missing from this location today and this location was forgotten, buried, just like the remembrance and the sacrifice of Schlageter, which was forgotten and appeared run-down [pause]. And these few men, old fighters, tired out by the battle, SA men, who back then had to dig with their hands, with their nails, to create this location here anew, and then they had to dig anew amongst the German people, for the remembrance and the memory of this man, to these dead. Comrades, to live is difficult, to die is tremendous! [echo].

This newsreel preserves the vocal tone and delivery of Göring’s speech. The echoes produced by the sound system and its feedback retain the spatial vastness of the outdoor broadcast. Once Göring’s speech ended, it was followed by a full two minutes of silence, which was observed across the whole country. Amidst the sounds of “Ich hatt’ einen Kameraden,” Göring and other party leaders then descended to the empty lower area of the memorial to lay wreathes adorned with swastika flags. At the end of the ceremony, the Düsseldorf Gauleiter (regional party leader) Florian gave an impassioned speech about Schlageter, before participants were invited to join in singing both national anthems.

After these ninety minutes of memorial rituals in Golzheim, one hundred aeroplanes circled over the memorial site in formation. By filling the sky with noisy aircraft, the new regime could assert their visual and sonic presence and Germany’s renewed political strength, particularly given the ongoing disputes about the demilitarised status of the Rhineland in the 1930s. Subsequently, Hitler Youth groups marched through the city streets, carrying flags and singing, before gathering for a lunch by the Rhine riverbank. From 1 pm onwards, the uniformed SA and SS groups reassembled and marched southwards for a gathering in the city with rituals and song. The seventy thousand uniformed SA and SS members returned to the northern banks of the Rhine, where they could buy food and alcohol outside the Düsseldorf sports stadium (Rheinstadion) (see Figure 4). For those listening at home, a “Hörbericht” (listener report) was broadcast nationally at the same time, with an hour-long commentary by a Siemens factory worker, which provided the voice of the everyman as an “earwitness” account of the day’s events.

In the evening, the SA and SS squadrons returned through the city for a number of concert events and smaller music performances scattered around various inner-city locations and taverns. The conclusion to the festivities came in the late evening, with a concert of Prussian marches by one thousand musicians beginning at 9 pm from the opposite banks of the Rhine (Oberkassel). At 10 pm, cannon shots were fired to announce a light display, consisting of a giant reconstruction of the memorial cross with the text “Schlageter lebt” (Schlageter lives), and
finally, with aerial fireworks exploding over the heads of the spectators (“Die Schlageterfeiern” 1933) (Figure 6). The attempt at monumental design and spatial (omni)presence reveals an appeal to cross-sensorial experience, through a combination of loud sounds (brass bands, explosions) and visual spectacle (light display, fireworks).

These events performed a ritual and sensory re-education of the people, achieving an almost inescapable affirmative resonance in the singing as well as the rhythms of marching and staking a symbolic territorial claim on the city by performatively rejecting the earlier presence of foreign occupiers (the French military). Moreover, the festival represented an expansion on the events planned for the 1931 commemoration. The centralised coordination of the 1933 event was enabled by an intricate sound system, as postal authorities installed a telephone system with two hundred and fifty extensions around the city. Although on a smaller scale than the Berlin May Day events, the logistics of the event also relied on providing loudspeakers for crowd addresses and telephone lines for reporters.95 The 1933 ground plan I discussed earlier (Figure 3) suggests that the Schlageter committee provided for amenities, first aid and food stalls. However, the hand-drawn diagram and some of the correspondence does suggest that the organisation remained somewhat amateurish, which was one of the reasons given for why Adolf Hitler did not attend the event.96 Nonetheless, Minister of Interior

FIG. 6: Fireworks display on the final evening of the 1933 Schlageter commemoration, situated on the western banks of the Rhine River (Oberkassel) [May 1933]. Fotosammlung, Stadtarchiv Düsseldorf.
Wilhelm Frick directed all public buildings across Germany to hoist flags in commemoration of Schlageter on 26 May 1933 (Frick 1933b). Within the Rhineland, at least, Schlageter was a figure with fairly widespread appeal. The use of his memory in 1933 helped to facilitate a broader interest in the Nazi Party, which set it apart from the party’s other activities in this early period, such as book burnings, political violence and torchlight parades. Since the National Socialists had been considered a radical party, Schlageter was an integral, pre-existing figure for establishing social legitimacy, giving the appearance of continuity and performing order in the public realm. The waning popularity of the Schlageter myth during the late 1930s – after radical elements in the party had been brutally crushed in 1934 – might suggest that its function as a mechanism of legitimacy had outlived its use.

Conclusion

During the course of the 1930s, the occupation of the cityscape and integration of mediated sounds into public settings – and the corresponding impact on the soundscape at large – took on new proportions. To give an illustration of how an event was embedded into the soundscape and protracted across a long period, it is instructive to mention the preparations leading up to the national election in 1936. In March that year, retired Düsseldorf artist Albert Herzfeld observed in his diary that local newspapers unexpectedly announced a Hitler speech (1982: 54-5). In this radio speech, Hitler emphasised the unfairness of Germany’s situation due to Versailles Treaty stipulations and its willingness to have a non-aggression pact. Several hours later, “resounding tones” on the radio heralded the news that German troops were crossing the Hohenzollern Bridge in Cologne, as part of the decision to reoccupy the Rhineland. This news was followed by the order to hang flags on all public buildings and private houses for two days, and the announcement of elections being scheduled for a date three weeks later. The celebration of the German military re-occupation was thus coupled with several weeks of festive election propaganda, literally “covering the city” with leaflets, billboard posters, radio speeches and loudspeaker installations with announcements (55).

As Herzfeld describes it, the election weekend involved a symbolic staging on radio, not unlike that of the 1933 Schlageter memorial ceremony. According to the announcements in the newspaper, and paraphrased by Albert Herzfeld, on Friday, 20 April 1936, Hitler would give a speech in the Krupp factory in Essen for all German workers and soldiers. At 3.45pm the announcement would be made on radio to “raise the flags.” Upon this order, all flags on public buildings, business and houses across the country would be raised. Fifteen minutes later, the sirens of the Krupp factory would be rung to announce the Führer’s speech:

Along with the shrill sounds [gellender Ton] from the Krupp buildings in Essen, all the factories, ships and trains across the whole of Germany will let off all their sirens. Thereafter, the entire nation will observe one minute of silence and the halting of traffic. (Herzfeld 1982: 55)
This minute of silence would mark a demonstration of the people’s unity and support of Hitler’s so-called “policy of peace.” The following day, Saturday, 28 April, would mark a celebration of the “German people’s day of honour, freedom and peace.” From 6.30pm, the urban streets would be filled with the masses heading to communal listening points, in order to hear Hitler speak for the last time before the election. At 7.45pm the columns of party members would be assembled and ready to march in formation, upon which the bells of the Cologne cathedral would ring as a prelude to Hitler’s “appeal for peace” (*Friedensappell*) from the exhibition halls in Cologne. At the end of this appeal, the entire audience in the exhibition halls would intone (*anstimmen*) the “Altniederländische Dankgebet” (Old Dutch Prayer of Thanks). According to the reports, all German comrades in the entire country would join in (*einstimmen*) this singing. The final sounds (*Schlussakkord*) would be heralded by the song “*Herr, mach uns frei,*” which would be sung across Germany. From the beginning of this song the church bells could be heard and would continue for fifteen minutes for the “honour, peace and freedom of the German people” (Herzfeld 1982: 55).

There are several interesting aspects to this description of the pre-election rituals. The sirens were rung in the location of the broadcast in Cologne and were reinforced all over in sites of industry and transport. This listening experience would have involved mediated radio sounds finding congruence with outside sounds that echoed across the country, and its collective nature emphasised by public listening points distributed around cities. The broadcast reinforced the Cologne cathedral bells as an acoustic symbol of the Rhineland, employed here to mark the military reoccupation of the Saar region. Meanwhile, the appropriation of religious symbolism of the “Dankgebet” and “*Herr mach uns frei*” granted additional justification for this military action. Moreover, there are clear parallels between use of words like *anstimmen* and *einstimmen*, which refer to sounds, and *zustimmen*, to agree to something. This example demonstrates the occupation of urban space, both with Hitler’s presence in the Rhineland and with troops in the streets, which performed a connection between the national election and the German people gaining freedom from foreign military occupation. The day after the election was marked by celebrations for Hitler’s supposed win of 99 per cent of the votes, with torch-lit processions, musical performances and speeches given in all major cities (Herzfeld 1982: 57). In other words, during the large-scale party rituals of the 1930s, there is a notable expansion of the regime’s reliance on forms of acoustic presence and symbolism. Indeed, these orchestrated forms of suspense, sensory stimulation and vocal-corporeal participation can be best understood as large-scale practices of affirmative resonance. The role of both sensory involvement and discipline in mass events offers a reminder of how rituals drawing on techniques of “sonic dominance” can involve both power and pleasure.

In the case of Schlageter, the commemorative events in May 1933 undoubtedly marked a high point in his status as a symbol of national heroism, with appeals to the auditory imagination through the symbol of French gunshots, which were reproduced in national radio broadcasts, theatre performances and published material. The significance of these imagined sounds for the nation’s
reawakening was literally re-enacted during the Schlageter memorial festival with the noisy reveille and was cited in Hermann Göring’s speech to the mass crowds at the memorial site. Another expansion of the auditory imagination, in the form of the hearing-speaking feedback loop, was evident in the popularisation of the “Heil Hitler” greeting. During the 1920s, its use reinforced the group identity of party members, and successfully heightened the party’s appeal within the popular imagination. By 1933, the mass incantations of the greeting, as affirmative call and response interactions, invoked an overwhelming sense of group belonging, mobilising a politics of the body through codified vocal-corporeal activity during large events.

Although Schlageter’s memorial site was incorporated into more comprehensive attempts to transform Düsseldorf’s topography, his mythology never regained the momentum evident in the decade between 1923 and 1933. In the decade following his death, Schlageter was an indispensable model for the New Man – young, strong, militant and ideological – as deemed necessary by the Nazis for their anticipated Volksgemeinschaft. Indeed, with Schlageter the Nazi Party was able to manipulate the recent humiliation of the French occupation as a means for inciting pledges of national loyalty. As I have demonstrated, in order to achieve this goal the Nazis kept the public in what George Mosse has described as “a permanent state of excitement” during the early months of 1933 (1966: 366). Popular participation was invited in spectacles of national loyalty, which appropriated familiar elements from Christian rituals, traditional songs and music practice, and through strategies of tourism, commodity consumption and memorialisation.

Affirmative resonance thus reflects a specific technique of mass persuasion, which in this case helped to simultaneously facilitate a mourning of Schlageter and a celebration of national community. It marked a move from techniques of local presence and imaginative appeal in the 1920s to a combination of spatial occupation, acoustic omnipresence and community building. This concept has provided a way to account for the expanded geographical dimensions to large-scale rituals, from the geometrical organisation of bodies to the use of sound to permeate and rhythmically order urban spaces. It reminds us how sounds can be used to assert distinct political agendas, given their ability to reverberate through urban spaces and reach beyond the field of vision. Nonetheless, my study of the Schlageter memorial site has also emphasised the labour and difficulties involved in achieving an ideal exchange between sound and space during National Socialism. Where here I considered William McNeill’s emphasis on marching and military coordination in terms of Nazi street politics and festivals, in the following chapter I will pick up on his other category of community celebration and dance, which forms an impetus for my interest in how the 1930s might be considered in terms of a festivalisation of the everyday.