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# THE MUSICAL ARSENAL IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR. “DIE WACHT AM RHEIN“ IN TRANSYLVANIAN SAXONS’ REPERTOIRE

## Abstract

This article investigates the political and social role of the song *Die Wacht am Rhein* in the context of the Great War and focuses on its presence in the Transylvanian Saxons’ repertoire. I examine the social and political connotations of its performance before and during the Great War. I demonstrate how the song was instrumentalized to serve the processes of mobilization and how it was able to keep up the morale of both combatants sent to fight and of the ones on the home front. I insist on the capacity of the song to be integrated in a polyphony of national repertoires and even to transgress ethnic borders. I also show the migrating power of the metaphor of “border watch” and its capacity to overlap various other geographical and political realities from the Eastern front.

**Keywords:** music, *Die Wacht am Rhein*, Transylvanian Saxons, The Great War, Pan-Germanism.

It seems to be in human nature to go to war. Like doing to war, singing is also a significant part of every human culture and going to war singing is a primordial condition of human being. Hence, wars can produce a mass of musical repertoire that may have a stronger or softer impact on the singers. In various ways music is part of the war from the incipit until afterward in processes of remembering. During the war, old repertoire of various use in peace time or new compositions created and/or performed for different reasons are usually preordained to help the active and/or passive participants to cheer up or to help forgetting, to attenuate and to console, to celebrate or to commemorate, etc. These generic assertions about the relation between war and music(king) understood as a dynamic social act, as something that people do and get involve in and with,<sup>1</sup> emphasize the functional feature of music regardless of the conflict one may refer to.

With all the precarities the Great War brought with it, music(king) never ceased. It was by music that crowds reacted when they learnt about the declarations of war and music joined the recruits during the mobilization and their departures from train stations. Music was performed in the trenches and it consoled the wounded in hospitals as much as it entertained the relatives left at home. Finally, music(king) provided with a sense of dignity when the dead bodies were brought home or interned on the spot nearby the battlefield. The war context reshaped the music(king) which had to keep on entertaining, to bolt out fear, to sacralize the human losses by means of national commemoration practices, etc. All these functions continued to be fulfilled during the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries and the memory of the war left consistent traces decades later in the popular music.<sup>2</sup>

For obvious reasons, in this paper, I will only refer to Max Schneckenburger's *Die Wacht am Rhein* which even the Transylvanian Saxon belligerents in the Great War, serving into Austria-Hungary army, truly enjoyed singing. There are various reasons standing behind my choice. First, the singing of *Die Wacht am Rhein* testifies for the cultural transfers between the motherland (The German Reich) and an Eastern European German speaking enclave living, for century, in a peripheral province of the Austria-Hungary. Second, it reveals how multiple loyalties towards the motherland and the fatherland (Danube dualist Empire) of the Transylvanian Saxon subjects could be expressed by different musical repertoires without generating much frictions. Third, it helps to examine how a highly targeted, nationalist popular song dedicated to a political affair in the West, that had nothing to do with the immediate circumstances in which Transylvanian Saxons lived, turned out to find such a wide audience in the East and to become a central piece of the musical repertory they played when they fought in the Great War.

### **The birth and the dissemination of a patriotic song**

*Die Wacht am Rhein's* career proves to be the expression of German nationalism and to document the birth of the European nationalism which is credited to have been born on the Rhine.<sup>3</sup> Its highest momentum of celebrity was reached in the 1870-1871 French Prussian War.<sup>4</sup> From that point on the song was interpreted constantly until the end of the Second World War when the cumulative sense of guilt had to be assumed and

the song was expelled from the national repertoire. From the perspective of the ethnomusicologist, it represents a typical example of a nationalist music imposed from up to the bottom<sup>5</sup> with a certain amount of success. Through different channels of dissemination, it succeeded to “inject pan-German nationalism into the lower and middle classes.”<sup>6</sup>

The song was part of what has been called the *Rheinliedbewegung*<sup>7</sup> which emerged in the 1840s in the context of the Rhine crises. As a matter of fact, there was a wide production of songs and in her meticulous study Cecelia Hopkins Porter counted approximately 400, more or less elaborated or kitsch tunes dedicated to a river discursively turned into a metaphor. The metaphors associated to the river were immediately understood and used as political weapons which proved in the long run very influential within the cultural nationalism.<sup>8</sup> To put it straightly, the songs in this collection were a reaction to the French politics of conquest east of the Rhine, therefore, they carry in themselves the seed of quarrel between French “civilization” and German *Kultur*. The cultural Germanisation of the Rhine was an answer back to the French political agenda in which the Rhine was regarded as a *natural frontier*.<sup>9</sup> The area east of the Rhine underwent a process of mythologization, and resultingly it turned into a cradle of the nation.<sup>10</sup> The process imposed a selection, hence, only some of the poems in the *Rheinliedbewegung* succeeding to resist over time. The highest level of popularity was reached by those that had been set to music and were performed in various milieus and temporal historical contexts. *Die Wacht am Rhein* enjoyed such a fortunate fate.

Before the Great War the song was available to the public in various formats from sheet music, booklets (Commersbücher),<sup>11</sup> being also engraved on the pedestal monuments,<sup>12</sup> or even got associated with various iconographic productions like it was the case of the postcards.<sup>13</sup> As recently demonstrated, the last mentioned mediatic items were used as propaganda in the Great War because they supported the idea of a war carried for a noble cause: the defense of the pan-national idea of Germanness. Schools and collegiate music groups helped a great deal to the transfer and adoption of the song in routine musical repertoire.<sup>14</sup>

This institutional infrastructure that assured the success of the song was replicated beyond the borders of the Reich, the German model being imitated in institutionalizing musical life in Eastern Europe. Even in the musically advanced Habsburg Monarchy one can identify the effect of cultural transfers from the German lands and later German Reich. Within this process, not only the forms of institutional musical life but also the

German repertoire was exported and adapted to serve local needs and political agendas. Obviously, here, *Die Wacht am Rhein* was performed especially in the German speaking communities and was intended to emphasize the group's *Volkstumlichkeit*.<sup>15</sup> No wonder to see that the song was instrumentalized as a weapon when national tensions between cultures in the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy began to sharpen. However, a close reading in the temporal, political and regional context(s) would demonstrate that the understanding of *Die Wacht am Rhein* performance could vary enormously in various German enclaves.

During the process of the national building, the Transylvanian multicultural environment could not remain indifferent to the tunes of the others. In case of the German citizens of the Dualist Monarchy, who began to openly show double loyalty towards the Habsburg dynasty but also to the German Reich it was prerequisite to let them sing pan-nationalist repertoire. *Die Wacht am Rhein* was a central piece in this program. As it was noticed, along with the national anthem, the "*Prinz Eugen der Edle Ritter*" song, *Die Wacht am Rhein* was steadily inserted in what was called the "official" military culture" of the Francisco-Josephine times.<sup>16</sup>

The political alliance between the two states only encouraged these developments. Progressively, in the realm of music even specialized musical journals like *Musik für Alle* encouraged the practice of a mixed repertoire that would support the cultural and military alliance between The German Reich and Austria-Hungary.<sup>17</sup>

The song was inserted in a variety of low - brow or high - brow events, in formally organized or improvised musicking. Even when it found no place in the announced program of different high - brow musical performances, *Die Wacht am Rhein* could be spontaneously performed by the musicians and/or by the audience.<sup>18</sup> Unquestionably, the *Die Wacht am Rhein* was a central piece in the entertainment culture during the Great War.

Yet, variables in place and time did occur. In this respect, one shall admit that there was not always a total consensus in the songs representativity. With all the public euphoric manifestations in the streets of the major towns, even in the German Reich, in the context of the outburst of the Great War, the singing of *Die Wacht am Rhein* on the streets was responded by Social Democrats with *Arbeitermarseillaise*.<sup>19</sup> Occasionally, this polyphony was tolerated, some other times it was taken as a sign of insubordination of a category of citizens and the police arbitrated the affair with its own means of bringing things, by force, under control.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, in smaller towns the reaction to the threat represented by the inevitable confrontation with Russia convinced even the Social Democrats, who generally opposed war, to sing *Die Wacht am Rhein*.<sup>21</sup>

Undeniably, the song's initial social function was to instil a sense of male camaraderie<sup>22</sup> which reconfirms the functional dimension of communal singing.<sup>23</sup> This power of music in building masculine solidarities was very soon recognised and instrumentalized in the Great War by the officers in the Central Powers' armies.<sup>24</sup> Like everywhere in Europe, popular songs like *Die Wacht am Rhein* contributed to the voluntary participation of citizens in the war effort on both battlefield and the home front<sup>25</sup> because it exploited the concept of devotion/loyalty (*Treue*).<sup>26</sup> During the war, *Die Wacht am Rhein* was expected to work as a psychological emotional enhancer and civil religious and military authorities collaborated, doing their best that the song would be present in every soldier's knapsack.<sup>27</sup> The Transylvanian Saxons' case documents not only the same preoccupation of the authorities but also the omnipresence of the tune in the repertoire they sang during the Great War.

The steady contacts Transylvanian Saxons established over the centuries with the German lands facilitated the cultural transfers. They are accountable both in form and content. The musical life, be it religious or profane, closely followed a German pattern and, consequently, musical life has been interpreted as an expression of preserving Germanness.<sup>28</sup>

In what follows I will highlight the tune's role in motivating soldiers and their relatives at home to (re-)create an emotional bond<sup>29</sup> by reiteration of the idea of pan-national brotherhood. By commonly singing *Die Wacht am Rhein* in different venues and on the battlefields across Europe, the imaginary community of singers – fighters could share the belief that the war they fought in was a matter of duty to defend their collective pan-national identity. Therefore, I examine the narratives published in the religious, educational and daily Transylvanian Saxon press abounding in news in which *Die Wacht am Rhein* was mentioned. My intention is to distinguish the social and political functions and the meanings with which the song was attributed in different theatres of war, by the variety of participants partaking in the conflict.

The Transylvanian Saxons were fairly familiarized with the patriotic repertoire from the German lands. Indisputably, *Die Wacht am Rhein* may be regarded as exponential in the process of asserting a local belongingness to Germanness by adoption of a nationalist German musical repertoire.

When the Great War commenced the Saxon Evangelical Church with the support of land credit institution (*Bodenkreditanstalt*) got involved in providing the parishioners recruited with a booklet, in pocket-size format, which was published in two editions in 1914 and 1915 and was widely distributed among them. It included a long list of religious and patriotic songs. *Die Wacht am Rhein* was among them,<sup>30</sup> and, as I will soon demonstrate it was popular being very often sang in various contexts.

Two articles published one after the other in the Transylvanian main daily journals from Sibiu (Hermannstadt), respectively, from Brașov (Kronstadt) in September 1915 demonstrate how omnipresent was the song in asserting Transylvanian Saxons' affiliation to the German cause. As a matter of fact, the very minute essays inform about the birth of the song and the fate of the original manuscript. I will only insist on those remarks which can explain the relevance of the song in the recent context of the war. In *Siebenbürgisch - Deutsche Tageblatt* was recognized that: "Next to the respectable "Gott erhalte" in the present, every single day, sounds in our ears the proud defend and defy song "Wacht am Rhein" which for 44 years lifts the hearts of the Germans."<sup>31</sup> If the title of this first attempt to map the birth and the saga of this patriotic song makes use of a line from it, the article from the *Kronstädter Zeitung* proves more straight forward when it comes to explain the significance of the song for the present time' consciousness of the readers and performers. Entitled *The Commemoration day of Die Wacht am Rhein*, it specifically wants to be a "contemporary recollection" (zeitgemäße Erinnerung) of the vast essay published some days earlier in the Sibiu newspaper by Dr. Eugen Meller from Bern. The article opens in a quite similar tone but also introduces new repertoire with which the song had to compete, or better to harmonize with, in the present context. "Next to our marvelous heart reaching popular hymn and the solemn melody of the "Heil dir im Siegerkranz", one hears daily, wherever a band wants to give expression to their high spirits, the magnificent defend and defy song of the Germans, the 45 years old "Die Wacht am Rhein""<sup>32</sup>. The author of the article acknowledges that, at that moment, the town Bern was in possession of the original manuscript and calls it "an expensive national treasure" (kostbaren Nationalschatzes). Like in the first article published in Sibiu, the anonymous journalist from Brașov went on explaining the context in which the song emerged, how its adaptation to music turned the song into a recitative in singing festivals and how in the context of the French Prussian war, from 1870-1871, the song reached its highest celebrity. Finally, he ended by stressing that it

is Karl Wilhelm, the composer of the music, that deserves most praises because he had the inspiration to set the text on music.<sup>33</sup> In any case, from content to the intent, both authors provided various arguments why the song had been, and continued to be, a clear and firm codification of the idea of defense of the German *Kultur*.

### **The meanings and the functions of *Die Wacht am Rhein* in the narrative context**

Thanks to a very active and rich press, the readers in Braşov, the most remote major German town in the Dualist Empire's province of Transylvania, were well informed about the way in which the inhabitants from Berlin reacted to the declaration of war in the summer of 1914. They learned that on July 26, thousands of people went out on the famous boulevard Unter den Linden and sang the Austrian folk hymn and the *Die Wacht am Rhine*. In front of the French and Russian embassies the crowd shouted loud "*Down with Serbia*" and moved afterwards to the Italian and Austrian embassies to show their solidarity. Similar manifestation of contesting the enemy and its international protector, respectively, of solidarity with the Austrian and Italians were recorded all around the empire, more precisely in cities like Frankfurt am Main and Hamburg.<sup>34</sup>

While the war was still in its diplomatic phase, it was joined by the big towns' residents who made use of the cultural means already available. Hence, the crowds joined together and rallied in order to demonstrate the existence of a sense of solidarity between allies by commonly singing very popular folk hymns among the Reich German urban residents. Scenarios staging solidarity among the allies were recorded also in the Double Monarchy's capitals Vienna and Budapest. The telegrams received at the redaction of the Transylvanian daily newspaper were completed by some supplementary information that was considered worth to be widely shared among the Transylvanian Saxon readership. Probably the main reason was to show that the war was not only an issue concerning the monarchs but also to demonstrate the adhesion to the cause of war as manifested by common people in the capital cities. That this was the intent becomes evident if one considers the details provided about the participants in a procession. A report insisted on the fact that when the crowd began to move "*one could notice next to simply dressed workers also elegant women and men of higher society.*" In front of the Serbian legation and

the Russian embassy they shouted, "*Down with Russia!*" while in front of the German embassy the same crowd stopped and sang *Die Wacht am Rhein*. Soon the participants hailed in stormy cheering the German Reich and Kaiser Wilhelm. The rest of the procession lead the socially heterogenous crowd in front of the city hall where, under the unfolded of the black yellow flag, they went on singing the folk hymn.<sup>35</sup> Of course, this could be judged as an auspicious circumstantial situation occasioned by out of the ordinary events which made the harmonious performance of national repertoires desirable. But such reports were not at all singular.

A Budapest rally from August 15, gathered 15000 participants singing *Die Wacht am Rhein* in front of the Turkish and Bulgarian consulates.<sup>36</sup> Four days later news from demonstrations in other major cities of the empire arrived in Transylvania. They informed that recent interethnic internal tensions could be surmounted by the immediacy deriving from the new circumstances. The author of the columns published in August 19, 1914 in *Kronstädter Zeitung* started with a reference to the biblical text in which the prophecy of the lamb and the wolf's cohabitation seem to materialize in those decisive days. This biblical reference suggests a growth in the people's piety that left traces in the discourses and the interpretation of the (re-)actions concerning the state of war.<sup>37</sup> Further, the article emphasized the fraternization of the Germans and the Czechs in the city of Prague as demonstrated by the singing of the *Volkshymn* in German and Czech language on the streets of the town. Even the mayor of the town showed himself willing to get involved. In front of the crowds he declared the fraternity of arms and the unity of Germany and Austria - Hungary. To strengthen a sense of welcomed astonishment it was noted, that also in Budapest the war against Serbia stirred the crowds to sing *Die Wacht am Rhein* on the streets and, surprisingly, that the words of the tune were translated in Czech language.<sup>38</sup> Obviously, these pieces of news were meant to be spread as examples to be followed elsewhere in the Double Monarchy and may be regarded to have propagandistic intents. They conveyed the idea that if the internal rivalries between Panslavism and Pangermanism could be solved, as the singing together proved it, eventual discord at provincial level could have the same fortunate fate.

Gradually, the press reports become increasingly concerned with the state of mind at the regional and local level. They try to illustrate a prowar readiness, visible at least in the urban milieu. The idea is supported by the repeated performance in the Café Transylvania from Brașov of a concert given by the military band of the local regiment. The military

band performed “*Gott erhalte*”, “*Heil dir im Siegerkranz*” “*Hymnus*” und “*Szózat*”, “*Siebenbürgen, Land des Segens*”, “*Die Wacht am Rhein*”, and “*Prinz Eugen*”. All songs were received with “*outstanding applause*” and repeated to satisfy the “*stormy enthusiastic rally.*”<sup>39</sup> It seemed a perfect context in which the military authorities could get involved to manipulate a disposition for the war among the local audience by playing a previous politically antithetic repertoire. As recorded, the answer of the ethnically mixed audience was very enthusiastic, and the requirement for the repetition of the performance only confirms it. This situation made the tensions between monarchic, national, local or imported pan-national repertoire be forgotten. Different antithetic issues seem to find a solution by satisfying the musical tastes of everybody. Moreover, having a regiment army band involved in performing such a mixed repertoire, the intention became clear, to show that it was in everybody’s interest to use a heterogenous music selection to make citizens in ethnically mixed environment find ways to cooperate in the common patriotic effort of serving the country.

It was not only the military authorities interested to achieve solidarity by means of propaganda for the war which made music(king) an essential part in the process of preparing for the military confrontation. Occurrences from August 1914 in Braşov reveal that it was possible that third parties could contribute to a positive and prowar attitude. Furthermore, it could be independent of any kind of official propaganda intervention of any state institution. Thus, spontaneous readiness to take part in the war was illustrated in a note published in *Kronstädter Zeitung*. It referred to an out of the ordinary happening in the town. The journalist described a daily process of repatriation of the Reich Germans, who in their way home from Romania and other Balkan countries had to travel through Braşov. Nothing special about this route(s) taken by the Germans, except that, a night before, two trains arrived in Braşov train station. They were not only decorated with flowers and flags but also stopped for a longer while. This gave the chance for 27 of the male aboard to get organize and march through the streets of Braşov where they chose to sing enthusiastically the *Die Wacht am Rhein* in an attempt to deliberately display their manhood bravery. When their group met a part of the local infantry regiment, they immediately ceased singing *Die Wacht am Rhein* and started singing “*Ich hatt einen Kameraden.*”<sup>40</sup> The piece of information implied that the Reich Germans were ready to display a martial attitude, to promote on their way home in the Saxon towns the idea of a just war they were

about to take part in. They did it by singing *Die Wacht am Rhein* which became an unofficial anthem of the Germans everywhere. But as the happenings, showed it, they were also aware that for the state authorities this repertoire could have been offending since the Austrian - Hungarian army was multiethnic. Hence, in order to avoid any disagreements when they met the local regiment they switched to a song which could confirm and strengthen a feeling of camaraderie of arms. One can, thus, recognize the effect of informal cultural diplomacy.

The frequent presence of the foreign allies in Brașov involved a mobilisation from the part of the local elites to make everybody feel welcomed. When an Ottoman Muslim regiment arrived in town, the musical diplomacy was once again a welcomed tool. Contemporary readers could learn how kindly local elites treated the new commers with several organ concerts. And the story went on. Another “*nice people from the Balkan Peninsula*” visiting the town and treated as an ally “*were the students attending (presumably German) universities*”. On their way to Bulgaria, to answer the recruitment order, they took a short break to Brașov. “*They spent time with the young local men in the coffee-shop Krone and the popular enthusiasm reached its climax and found expression into singing of the Bulgarian hymn, of the Hymnus and of Die Wacht am Rhein*”. Nothing special up to this point, just a typical display of solidarity between citizens of some allied states achieved by interpretation of a repertoire that each found nationally representative. However, the comment that follows clarifies the relevance of *Die Wacht am Rhein* in the recent context of the war. “*The fact that the German battle song which was for the first time rang out publicly 45 years ago, can be heard at the moment not only on the German lips, is pleasant and demonstrates that Germany has also gained new sympathies through its leading of the war*”<sup>41</sup>. Although the journalist shares the idea that these feelings might be changing in time, the above-mentioned statement testifies for the capacity of an already emblematic German hymn to have a central part in the diplomatic relations among the Triple Alliance states.

The same song could bind not only Germans but also allies having to share the same experiences in the Eastern front. Reports about the Eastern theatre of war, where the Transylvanian Saxons had to fight, sanction the omnipresence of *Die Wacht am Rhein* in the soldiers’ repertoire. The article entitled “*Shoulder by shoulder*”, which is a taking – up of an article from *Pester Lloyd*, reproduced a letter of a Reich German writing about the relation between Germans, Austrians and Hungarians. The reader of

the Transylvanian Braşov daily newspaper could be very interested since the story referred to the Romanians from Bistriţa, the Saxons from Braşov and the Hungarians who had to spend time together cooking, sharing food and drinking. The story went on with the comrades – an appellation constantly repeated in the context of this specific narrative – being engaged in a harmonious relation where any offending words were avoided, and generous exchanges was the rule. It also emphasized that: “*Often, during the evening, we sang our German songs, then it was Hungarians’ turn and they sang in their melancholic way. I have found out that three comrades were Hungarians (Stockungar), who could hardly understand German; however we all know Die Wacht am Rhein and we sang it along.*”<sup>42</sup> In the context, that may be suspected to be a report in which the propaganda apparatus fully interfered, with the intent of delivering home the image of a harmonious relation shared by soldiers of various ethnic background, one acknowledges that *Die Wacht am Rhein* was epitomized as the supreme byword of comradeship. Singing it along by all the soldiers having little knowledge of German, it confirms its power to go over cultural differences and work beyond the eventual particularism that could undermine the alliance. *Die Wacht am Rhein* appeared to be a transferred and widely circulated cultural artifact that was attributed with the feature of building unity in the Triple Alliance and provide everybody with a sense of confidence in the final victory.

Another episode recorded in the Transylvanian Saxons press reaffirmed *Die Wacht am Rhein’s* martial role in the context of allied armies joining together and simultaneously provides explanations for the preference for the song in German culture. A note dating in the autumn of 1915 informed that the music of the infantry regiment celebrated the unification of Austrian - Hungarian troops with the “*brave Bulgarian alliance comrades*” (wackeren bulgarischen Bundesgenossen). After the highly enthusiastic intonation of the official filo-monarchic “Gott erhalte” and of the Hungarian *Hymnus* it was played something that by its rhythm and melody reminded of the Prussian *Heil Dir im Siegerkranz* but which by “*weak and affected adaptation*” (schwache und gekünstelte Umschreibung) did not make any impression at all. Soon after, the Saxon journalist elucidated about the situation of the musical arsenal at hand.

As much as we know, up to now, the official Prussian hymn is not abolished yet, under all circumstances, however, is *Die Wacht am Rhein*, the battle and war song of our alliance comrades which in such occasions has no

competition. We are very much obliged for the admission of this war song in the program of the victory celebration and if we are allowed to give voice to the entire German population from our town, it would be like that: henceforth *Die Wacht am Rhein* with its memorable warlike swing may be accepted again in their program by the regiment music such as it happened earlier.<sup>43</sup>

In the context *Die Wacht am Rhein* was regarded as a convenient solution to a recognized shortage or partial unfulfillment of the musical arsenal representative for the Reich Germans. The closing comment suggests that the local Saxons population considered for a long while *Die Wacht am Rhein* as an affirmative voice of the stronger German brothers. The lobby made for *Die Wacht am Rhein's* constant presence in a repertoire played at official events by the Austrian-Hungary army bands only answered a necessity that was already an unofficial common practice. Officializing the song was a step forward to accommodate an ideal to the reality in the field. In other words, it was expected that the song would be treated as a semi-official anthem of the Reich and not simply as a *Volkslied*.

The home front immediately reacted to the war. In this process, *Die Wacht am Rhein* became part of the pupils' education. Although the function varied, and the meaning proved fluctuant, several episodes accounted for this tendency in the Transylvanian Saxon and even in the Hungarian schools. The song was recognized as favorite among "the always tauter appearance of the youth army". Their parades from November, 26 and December, 3rd revealed that it became "self-understood" for them to sing "with predilection *Die Wacht am Rhein*, if one takes into consideration that this war song turned into the new hymn for the entire Germanness". Again, its performance among the Hungarian youth revealed the "undreamt-of popularity of the song" which was also intoned in the context of the commemoration ceremony of the Queen Elisabeth in a girl boardinghouse in the same apparently German friendly Debresin.<sup>44</sup> Sharing a common musical repertoire was regarded as a constructive approach enabling to build bridges between formerly rival cultures. An occurrence which, given the present circumstances, could only be cherished.

The same *Die Wacht am Rhein* had the property to tighten the bonds between a group of school children from Sibiu and another one arriving from Vienna, in July 1917. The local newspaper reported, that after a long

journey, the Vienna children were received by their peers at the train station by singing *Siebenbürgen Land des Segens*, the song regarded as the Saxon anthem. They organised a parade and took their way to the Huet square where the school boys from the Realschule had been waiting for them. In front of the local gymnasium they sang “first of all *Die Wacht am Rhein*”. After that, the seminar choir sang several native songs, which were received by the Vienna guest with “lively calls of wellbeing” (Heilrufen). It was obvious that the meeting of two groups of foreign teenagers was recorded as a meeting between two parts of informal armies supporting each other. This time, the province had the role of provider with security for the pauperized children from the metropolis. The idea of unity is obviously enhanced by appealing to a common Pan-German repertoire, therefore *Die Wacht am Rhein* receiving priority. The entire welcoming ceremony was arranged to look like a celebration of common pan-national convention in which the language was replaced by music(ing) staged according to a mutually recognizable ritual.

In the pages of the central school journal, some authors underlined the idea that the Great War had an “agreeable effect” with respect to the relation between the nationalities in Transylvania. The sincere fraternity of the comrades was also illustrated by accounting for the repertoire they sang. It was recognized that, besides “*Kossuthlied*”, “*Gott erhalte*”, pieces which could satisfy and cultivate domestic loyalties, “*Heil dir im Siegerkranz*” representative for the German Reich could be widely acclaimed among Transylvanian Saxons. Last but not least, the same author emphasized that Honved officers showed themselves eager to learn from the Saxon students “*Die Wacht am Rhein*”. To be more effective in creating a durable bond and become strongly inclusive in terms of a multi-ethnic appeal, *Die Wacht am Rhein* could be rephrased to include lyrics like: “*The entire Hungarian People united and strong, shield the holy Landesmark.*”<sup>45</sup> Readers were in front of an idealistic narrative suggesting readiness to share the song by two formerly rival national cultures. The common war effort required an internal harmony that could be reached by singing. Building an imaginary “*spiritual community*” was prerequisite in those “*hours of danger*”, wrote the Saxon journalist. Besides “*Rackoczymarsch*” or Transylvanian Saxon songs, *Die Wacht am Rhein*, “*brought from the German universities on the Transylvanian valleys and turned into a national and student Lied without political flavour and which became indigenous*”, shall not be regarded anymore as a harm to the Hungarian citizenship.<sup>46</sup> The war becomes a perfect setting in which these musical

expressions of belongingness to a “*national community*” (Volksgemeinschaft) could be adopted or performed without fear of stirring negative spirits. On the contrary, it could facilitate a sense of bond and could create an atmosphere of authentic mutual toleration and collaboration. It was generally agreed that singing a mixed repertoire would be a path to reach a common supra-national understanding. The success depended on the local willingness to make exogenous songs transferred from the German Reich inclusive enough to be accepted by rewriting of some of their lyrics. Although it had been adopted as a supplementary sonic identity marker by the Saxons, *Die Wacht am Rhein* proved a terrain of flexible adaption and, hence, recognized as lucrative for the reeducation of the provincial inhabitants in the authentic spirit of tolerance. The narrative changes, hence, the focus from the nationalist value to a supra - national connotation of a formerly imported student song.

The nationalist repertoire among which *Die Wacht am Rhein* had a privileged position was usually associated with the bourgeois culture within which the singing associations actually came into being.<sup>47</sup> In March 1915, the association of men singers from Sibiu marked its 55 years of existence and despite of the war shortages and restrictions, the members felt that the moment had to be celebrated. The scrupulosity of the organizer comes out from the very beginning when they discussed about the ethical aspects of organizing a celebration in a context like “*these grave times*”. They finally did it and motivated that they were trying to “*raise the head and the hearth*” and to elevate “*the consciousness of belongingness and of the common fight for the sacred good of the humanity*”. They organized a “*silent evening*” in Unikum venue. The reviewer wrote that, although incomplete, 30 of its members being in the battlefield, the choir did not lose “*in beautiful sounding*” and “*precision*”. After the opening speech, the choir sang *Die Wacht am Rhein* on four voices, the moment being followed by the Schumann’s “*Sie sollen ihn nicht haben, den freien deutschen Rhein*”, the “*Volkshymn*” and “*Deutsche Matrosenlied*”, “*Reiterlied*”, “*Steh ich in finsterner Mitternacht*”, “*Deutschen Flottenliedes*”, finally, the Prussian “*Heil dir im Siegerkranz*”<sup>48</sup> completing the performance whose main goal was to show willingness to support the war effort and rehearse the idea of Pan - Germanism. The overwhelming repertoire was manifestly of German origins and the obsession with the symbolical role of the Rhine as a natural frontier of the German Reich even German *Kultur* was epitomized by the singing in the opening part of two songs specifically dedicated to this topic.

In such strain conditions even, social groups which presumably shared another ideological believes did not find it improper to sing a German nationalist repertoire. The moral constraints deriving from the state of war and from the sense of solidarity with those sent to battlefield, required that every gathering from the home front should be very discreet. This was the premise of which the working men association from Sibiu was aware of when they organized a concert in the same *Unikum* venue. The gathering was described as a “*simple entertainment evening*”. Its income had to be donated to the recruited members of the association (71 out of 140) and to their families. The memory of the already fallen ones was acknowledged by a *Heill!*, which was followed by the enthusiast joining of the participants into singing *Die Wacht am Rhein*. The rest of the repertoire was “*Gott erhalte*”, “*Siebenbürgen*”, “*Reiters Morgenlied*” “*Vineta*” and “*Im Feld des Morgens Fruh*”.<sup>49</sup> It cannot go unnoticed that besides the local anthems, very much like in the case of bourgeoisie associations, the predominant German musical repertoire was militaristic. The selection was meant to express the solidarity of the members of the working men singing association with their members in the field. If they went, first and foremostly, for the singing of the song *Die Wacht am Rhein* it means that there was no other mobilising martial song more efficient at hand and that they understood that the present war effort required all the energies of the nation to get united beyond any doctrinarian preference. Singing a nationalistic repertoire confirms their inevitable contacts with the bourgeois musical culture and the choice could be evaluated as a double win compromise. It secured them from any harassment of the authorities and set them at bay from any public accusation of unpatriotic attitude or lack of solidarity with their peers as well as with the rest of the citizens from the province.

Naturally, the news from different battlefield kept the first page of daily journals, but Transylvanian Saxon press continued to constantly inform about the occurrences in the home front. The interest was not at all restricted to the town milieu. Now and then, news from the rural milieu showed how peasant engaged with the war effort on the home front. Following the example of the urban bourgeoisie society the “*local society of the friends of music organized a concert and the profit was given to the helping fond*”. In the context of war, the program was “*simpler than the usual*” nevertheless made it up with “*a lot of good taste*” although the orchestra was significantly diminished. The technical and aesthetic shortages caused by the war seem similar with those already mentioned

in the case of bourgeois and working men singing groups. What makes the similarity even striking to what was reported from the urban milieu is the repertoire. "*Rakoczymarsch*", waltzes like "*Schlittschuläufer*" and "*Estudiantina*", potpourri of "*Die Fledermaus*" operetta, compositions of Chopin and Mureșanu and so on. Besides these "*the 'Hymn' and 'Die Wacht am Rhein' aroused special applause (and) were sung along with enthusiasm by the listeners*". A final detail, that the "*considering the current difficult conditions, the concert was well attended*"<sup>50</sup> allows to state that the Saxons rural population was a big music lover. As seen, they were familiar with *Die Wacht am Rhein*, too. Short and succinct as it was, this information confirms the influence of the bourgeois culture in structuring the musical life even in the rural setting. More specifically the report shows that regardless of the milieu, the musical events got involved with the war effort directing the gains to the philanthropic activities. The enthusiastic reaction to the singing of *Die Wacht am Rhein* along with the official anthem demonstrate that, at least, the peasant elites from Miercurea Sibiului (Reussmarkt), where these news came from, were aware of the political function of music and that they also shared the ideas specific to Pan-Germanism. These political views could coexist, and various loyalties could be displayed by means of music.

Women gatherings and associations proved ready to wholeheartedly engage in the war effort in which their brothers, fathers, husbands or children had to fight. At certain events organized by these groups, musical performances were specifically selected to correspond to the state of war. The Saxon press in Sibiu wrote about an event from December 1914: "*The yesterday convivial evening corresponded exactly to the present deeply grave time. Händel's 'Largo' and Bathory's 'Pax Vobiscum' and 'Der Tod und das Mädchen' by Schubert were played*". The figure of the field marshal Blücher (the Prussian supreme commander in the anti-Napoleonic wars) was illustrated in a presentation. This reference was useful to highlight the similarity between "*the national mood in the past with the one from the present*", because the marshal provided with a good example of what it means to share the "*right strength of mind and confidence in the victory*". Notably, "*From the bottom of the heart, at the end of the presentation those present (among them, happily, many schoolgirls) joined in singing the beautiful war song Die Wacht am Rhein*". Readers were informed that donations, consisting in products, followed immediately after the concert ended.<sup>51</sup> By their charitable activity these women associations not only proved ready to symbolically fight by

performing a usually male martial repertoire, but also had to propagate the idea that the war fought by the entire society and with all the means available, will finally be won.

Associational life displayed a deep involvement with the practice of philanthropy.<sup>52</sup> Keeping up with traditions, the celebration of the winter holidays was a proper occasion to practice philanthropy and women had been generally entrusted with this task. In the war context it was not only the children in need that were the beneficiaries of these charitable activities but as the conditions dictated, also, the wounded adults. A report from January 1915, published in *Kronstädter Zeitung*, related how went on the celebration of the Christmas in Zărnești (Zernest). Organized by the local Red Cross the event was dedicated to the wounded soldiers. The journalist described a scene with the sufferings gathered around the decorated Christmas tree in the local communal hotel where they were offered gifts consisting in food, cigarettes and clothing. The symbolic gift they received was also the musical representation delivered by 10 young girls who besides the traditional "*Stille Nacht*" and "*after a Hungarian declamation, the public replied by singing the Hungarian hymn. At the end, [the article adds], was recited the beautiful German poem "Die Mutter" and Die Wacht am Rhein was sang.*"<sup>53</sup> The narrative suggests the existence of an ethnically mixed population of injured. The young female performers proved ready to fulfil the expectancies and tastes of an audience that could be comforted by hearing the repertoire that was assumed as culturally representative. One learnt that the Hungarian declamation was followed by the patriotic Hungarian "*Hymn*" while *Die Wacht am Rhein* came immediately after the German poem. The occurrence confirms a long 19<sup>th</sup> century praxis of music getting involved in charity activities when the circumstances required.<sup>54</sup> More specifically, the narrative informed that all genders and ethnicities showed willingness to transcend eventual rivalries and based on reciprocal respect listened to what was selected to be staged as a national repertoire that was supposed to symbolically heal the psychological wounds of the soldiers.

A report from autumn of 1915 could reconfirm the intersection between the female musical education, multiethnicity and the rural background of the subjects. Once again, it brings evidence for the dissemination and impact of *Die Wacht am Rhein* in Transylvania. The wide familiarization of the rural population in Saxon villages with *Die Wacht am Rhein* is demonstrated by a report taken over from Pester Lloyd. It focused on the invitation made by the Hungarian Reformed church community from

Cristuru Secuiesc (Szekelzkerestur) to the 12 Saxon girls from the nearby village Archita (Erked). The girls were invited to take part in the evening entertainment program dedicated to support the blinded soldiers. One learned that

They came in their local girl costume and were saluted by the mostly Hungarian participants in a heartedly way. They sang the Hungarian Hymn which was listened standing by the entire public and received with frenetic applause. They still sang German national songs (Volkslieder) and to close the representation, to the general requirement, they sang *Die Wacht am Rhein*, which likewise was listened standing and enthusiastically acclaimed.

The representation was continued with some occasional musical lyrics celebrating the personality of count Tisza composed by the daughter of the Archita Lutheran priest Regine Ziegler.<sup>55</sup> She was known as a song and poetry writer being very productive in the Saxon press where, during the wartime, she repeatedly published encouraging texts. The large dissemination among rural population and the resemantization of the message of *Die Wacht am Rhein* explains why it became a central piece in the repertoire of the women choirs transgressing bourgeois milieu.

Along with other German songs, the *Wacht am Rhein* was on the lips of the German population from Brașov in the autumn of 1916 when the town was liberated from the invading Romanian troops, the Entente ally, therefore the enemy, which were cast out of the town. The symbolical removal of the foreign forces flags, and the victorious armies were received with ovations. "Especially happy boiled the blood of the Saxon and the German spectators at the splendid march of the German helper passing by and singing *Die Wacht am Rhein* or *Deutschland über alles*."<sup>56</sup> Without much doubt, the choice to single out these two titles was meant to provide with a sense of reconnection with the Germanness, respectively, to assure about the alliance's vitality and superiority. Ulrich Wien suitably described the attitude of Transylvanian Saxons in these circumstances as an "overexcited religious nationalistic reflex" that was to be recognized in Sliminic (Stolzenburg), a Saxon village not far away from Sibiu, where it was orchestrated by the local priest.<sup>57</sup> In exactly the same circumstances, the welcoming reaction of the population in Sibiu was repaid by the liberators Reich German soldiers with "*Deutschland über alles*", "*Deutschlands hoch in Ehren*", "*Wir treten zum Beten*",

*"Morgenrot"*.<sup>58</sup> By such a selection of songs, so familiar to the Saxon population which chose not to take refuge in other parts of the empire, the Reich Germans found a way to affirm and reassure the local German speaking population by the military superiority of Germany and its watching over protective mission.

The continuation of the military operations of the Triple Alliance beyond the Carpathians and the final defeat of the aggressors whose capital, Bucharest, finally, got into the hands of the Germans was saluted in the Braşov daily newspaper. Curiously, instead of providing with evidence from the town or from Bucharest, a vast report described the response to the victory as it came from the university of Würzburg. The celebration of the victory against Romania, in the big hall at Luisengarten, was attended by *"more than 200 persons, professors, docents, teaching assistants, students, most of the them in uniforms, the women students being represented also in an impressive number"*. After speeches about the significance of the victory in the context of the war, the participants sang *"Deutschland, Deutschland uber alles"*, or the song *"Der Gott, der Bismark"* [...] *Like a renewed vow of patriotic faithfulness rang out the fresh song "Burchen heraus!"*. Prof Dr. K. B. Lehmann *"raised a vivid interest and proposed an enthusiastic toast on the faithful Carpathian border guarding"* (treue Karpathengrenzwacht) secured by *"the pioneers of the German culture in Transylvania whose threat represented by the Romanian neighbour now, probably, for all the times was turned away."* After another song, the *"too early closing"* traditional academic feast of student fraternity (Kommerses), ended with *"the powerful sounds of Die Wacht am Rhein."*<sup>59</sup> The vast note highlights the Pan-German feelings manifested in the circumstances of victories against the enemies from the eastern front which found echo within the academic milieu in Germany. Similarly, reproducing this information in the Saxon press it was suggested that this achievement on the Eastern Front was a foreseen success of Germanness. The mixed repertoire of old and new musical productions confirms the long term political relevance of the academic communal singing. Indisputably, the speeches held found inspiration in the verses of the *Die Wacht am Rhein* when the interpretation of the military retaliation was put in terms of the *"watch at the Carpathians"*. The closing of the event with the *Die Wacht am Rhein* was an apotheosis of the idea that the defense of the Germanness could go beyond the borders of the German Reich or the Austrian - Hungarian Monarchy.

The metaphor of Rhein as a border of *Kultur* which had to be defended by the Germans, turned out to be very influential in the eastern part of the continent. In a scrutiny over the present state of the war, a Saxon journalist wrote at the beginning of August 1915: *"If one mentions that Germany can constantly throw, to the West as well as to the East, new, good-trained troops"*, one must agree with the writer of *Die Wacht am Rhein*, who, *"in the fourth, earlier not intoned lyrics of the song"*, wrote: *"As abundant with water is your flood, / So is Germany in heroes' blood"* and one can consider how firm the alliance between our state and the German Reich became, so can one look confident in the future..."<sup>60</sup> The reference to the lyrics of the song can be regarded as a narrative strategy to strengthen the conviction that the Germans from the East, although subjects of the Austria – Hungary, could rely on the readiness to sacrifice and on the solidary intervention of the German Reich's troops.

It is almost certain that such a view was widely shared among the Transylvanian Saxons. Indicative in this respect may be the intertextual reading of the migrating leitmotif of "watching a border" delimited by any geographical element. It was employed in the lyrics of the song and, by transfer and adaptation, it could signify the same attitude of duty anywhere else in the German East. In the war context, occasional and/or ephemeral texts were created to reinforce the idea of a defensive war carried on by the Germans. The same watch on the Carpathian Mountains was thematized in an autochthonous drama entitled *"Karpathenwacht"*. The *"a consecration play"* was staged in Cincu (Groß-Schenk) with vocal by Malvine Abtoni and instrumental music by Rudolf Lassel. The reviewer wrote that in its five tableaux, *"the author follows the destiny of a human being, who on a far, lonelier watch, freezes to death [...]"* How deep the play penetrated the hearth of the listeners, it is shown by the fact that many days later the discussion was on nothing else but about this performance."<sup>61</sup> Basically, the representation could be inspired by the *Die Wacht am Rhein*. What is, however, striking is the significant change in tone. After 4 years of war the population in the back front and the soldiers were already suffering of war exhaustion<sup>62</sup> and the level of endurance was lower than ever. One can suspect that this performance could express a similar state of mind from the part of the Transylvanian Saxons. No trace of heroism could be convincingly associated with the idea of "watch" in 1918, and, probably, even the sense of duty had decreased considerably among the combatants.

Yet, in general, the singing of *Die Wacht am Rhein* was, at least, during the first part of the war, a vivid presence in the repertoire. It properly served

to establish a connection between German population in Transylvania and the Reich German troops transiting the area in their way to the Eastern front. In February 1915, a Braşov journalist covered an event which is informative about the mood of both the combatants and the local civilians:

At evening hours, at the train station one can notice long trains with German wagons, which go through the station with secret content, and one day we received the notification that a train with Reich German "workers" will go straight through here. The women in Codlea (Zeiden) got all refreshments and cigarettes together, and it was a short beautiful festivity that we celebrated with our German brothers at our train station. With the song *Die Wacht am Rhein* they carried on, while they promised "We will come again!"<sup>63</sup>

If the beginning of the article described a foot-dragging mood, not at all rare during Great War<sup>64</sup> among the locals, things rapidly changed with the arrival of the Reich Germans who provided with a sense of confidence also enhanced by the singing of *Die Wacht am Rhein*. Their rejuvenating presence and the choice of melody was credited to have the effect of changing the mood by providing a sense of brotherhood and a feeling that the stronger brother would also watch the back of the eastern siblings on both fronts. In the context of the narrative the secrecy of their mission is counterbalanced by the openly displayed weapon as represented by intoning the song.

In the context in which the military authorities representing the Reich Germans had to back out from Transylvanian towns they did it also by performing *Die Wacht am Rhein*. In July 15, 1918 *Kronstädter Zeitung* wrote:

The last company of field - grey uniform wearer (Feldgrauer) left Braşov on June 10, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. In their march off they sang *Die Wacht am Rhein* and "Mus I den zum Städtle hinaus", played by a small Landsturm band of just 13 musicians of the 18<sup>th</sup> infantry regiment Saarbrücken which so often had pleased us, with recognized excitement, by place and promenade music.<sup>65</sup>

In this account, the Transylvanian journalist described a dignified farewell not only of the entertainers but also of the protection providers in very difficult times. The association between a farewell march and *Die*

*Wacht am Rhein*, usually implying a proactive military conduct, sent an ambivalent message. By no means was German Reich's military departure interpreted as a defeat, but only described in nostalgic overtones.

The demise in war also raised the matter of dignity. Narratives about the loss of the beloved ones were impossible to dodge. However, the loss could be tamed by rhetorical means that could provide with some comfort. The stylistic option was to imagine a scenario in which it could be given a sense of dignity and a promise of resilience. To achieve this effect, the author of the essay the "War casualty" (*Der Kriegstod*) chose to briefly and concisely envisage a scene with a beloved one being delivered home in a coffin. The narrative is progressive, but it covers every aspect of what a dignified death had to look like. "*The postman comes and brings a black framed letter. A fatality! Who could be? Who's turn was it?... A music band blows. What God did, it is well done; right shall be His will; [...]* In between a small six years old child cries out: Firm stands, and true, the Watch, *Die Wacht am Rhein!*"<sup>66</sup> The entire text may be regarded as an idealized staging of the bereavement which is supposed to display the attributes deriving from *Kultur*: discipline, bravery, manly resilience and sense of duty. In such circumstances, singing *Die Wacht am Rhein* could express patriotism, a sense of duty and noble sacrifice that would overshadow feelings of grief. It also had to cultivate the consciousness that the fallen one would remain in the national pantheon of the generations to come. Thus, it is attributed a hybrid role to console the families and to commemorate the fallen ones as they were promised to be epitomized as national heroes.

## Conclusions

*Die Wacht am Rhein* was born in the conflicts between French and Germans in the 1840s. It is an example of musical creation deeply involved with cultural nationalism which lead to being treated as a semi-official hymn of the Germans around the world. The various historical events turned the song into a functional martial piece of music, performed in various occasions when the topic of nationhood was at stake. Although the title suggests a defensive agenda, the lyrics cultivate bellicose ideals. Transylvanian Saxons adopted it in their repertoire immediately after the song reached its celebrity during French - German War in 1870-1871. Even though not involved in the conflict, through this recitative mean,

Saxons could demonstrate their loyalty to the German *Kultur*. The song stimulated cultural Pan - Germanist agenda and in this respect, it fulfilled its mission in Transylvania, as well. When the Great War began the song was widely sang in Transylvanian Saxon communities along with representative indigenous songs of their own and of other ethnic groups and with the repertoire expressing loyalty towards the Habsburg House. This polyphony was supposed to tighten the cooperation of the provincial citizens and the alliance between the members of the Central Powers. On different fronts, *Die Wacht am Rhein* proved essential to raise spirits high, to keep a good morale at departure and on the front, to express the superiority of the German Reich, to establish a code of communication between Transylvanian Saxons and the German soldiers, to make oneself recognisable as belonging to the same cultural pan-nation engaged in a war that was generally interpreted as holy and defensive.

Even if, I avoided a chronological exposition of the documentary materials, finding more relevant to emphasize the social dynamics in which the song was performed and how the metaphor of "border watching" was transferred in the East, I must underscore that the first two years of the war abounded in information which confirms the recurrence of *Die Wacht am Rhein* in Transylvanian Saxons' repertoire. During the next years, the song appeared less frequently which may suggest that the enthusiasm for the war, carried to defend the idea of German *Kultur*, progressively decreased. However, the spontaneous and repeated performance of the song shows that it was very influential in expressing and endorsing a feeling of duty. Most probably, Transylvanian Saxons could imagine that by the singing *Die Wacht am Rhein* was also helpful to build a necessary sense of camaraderie with the defending/protective German brothers from the Reich. Although sang by members of various social groups and even by non - Germans, thus, suggesting a hegemonic process of acculturation, the song found a great echo among different gender and age categories. This finding confirms that it was part of a symbolic arsenal not only for those sent to fight in the frontline but also for those who remained at home and got engaged in their own way in the first total war that humanity had to go through.

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