

**Intermediary Between Two Worlds:
The Role of Eric Simon in Benny Goodman's Commissioning of Classical Music**

In the late 1930s, clarinetist and bandleader Benny Goodman (1909–86) represented the epitome of swing music and the American entertainment industry. Around the same time, he also added classical repertoire to his performance and recording portfolio, even commissioning numerous composers to write new pieces for him (counting compositions by Bartók, Milhaud, Hindemith, Copland, and others). In this paper, I examine a yet unnoticed but crucial figure in that context: Eric Simon (1907–92), a Viennese-born clarinetist and conductor who fled the Nazi regime in 1938 and, along with multiple other activities in the New York music scene, became Goodman's teacher for classical clarinet technique in 1940. Although scholars such as Walter Pass, Gerhard Scheit, and Wilhelm Svoboda (1995) as well as Horst Weber and Manuela Schwartz (2003) have described elements of Simon's biography in the context of migration studies, his relationship with Goodman has not yet garnered more than a footnote in the literature.

In 1941, Goodman turned to Simon for recommendations on which composers to ask for new clarinet concertos. Drawing on his own involvement in European immigrant networks, Simon suggested Paul Hindemith and Darius Milhaud, and then negotiated the contractual terms with them in Goodman's name. Newly found sources, in the form of fascinating correspondence preserved at UCLA and the Hindemith Institute Frankfurt, shed light on Simon's position as an intermediary in these collaborations and reveal how Simon balanced diverse interests: Goodman's, the composers', and, not least, his own. A major part of Simon's career was dedicated to the promotion of new music and European modernist composers. Bringing these together with an icon of American music served this purpose very well.

In addition, I compare the Hindemith/Milhaud projects with Goodman's very first classical commission: Bela Bartók's *Contrasts* (1938/39). This was mediated by the violinist Joseph Szigeti, aiming to support the financially struggling composer, as recently shown by Bartók scholars Tibor Tallián (2017) and Vera Lampert (2018). Goodman's early commissioning projects, as I argue, were primarily instigated by intermediaries, using their own networks and realizing their own agendas. Taking up on Howard Becker's socio-cultural concept of art worlds (1982), I not only present a new perspective on the described examples but also more generally on artistic collaborations and labor division in the sphere of Western art music in the twentieth century.