

## A Personal Pilgrimage

4<sup>th</sup> June 2018

This morning I begin a pilgrimage into my ancestry, travelling with my mother and Bernard to Wiesbaden, birthplace of my great grandfather Heinz Lewin (pictured).



Heinz 1888-1942 was a colourful character and celebrated composer of light opera and film scores.

He was captured in France and deported to Auschwitz. We have the details of his transport to Auschwitz on 9th September 1942. Whether he died en route or was gassed on arrival is unknown.

Lewin, Heinz -22.03.1888 Wiesbaden-1942 KZ Auschwitz ermordet

Heinrich Lewin, der sich *Heinz* nannte, arbeitete als Schlager-, Operetten- und Tonfilmkomponist in Berlin. Er komponierte auch unter den *Ps. Harry* und *Heinz Letton - Harry Niwell* und lebte laut Nazilex 1940 in Berlin. Fakt ist, dass ihn die Nazis 1942 ins *KZ Auschwitz* deportierten und er dort ermordet wurde! Da sich keinerlei Spur mehr von ihm fand, wurde er am 31.12.1945 für tot erklärt!

Operette:

Der lustige Kakadu - Der Prinzpapa - Morgen wieder lustig - Wenn im Frühling der Holunder (*Musikalischer Schwank*)

Film:

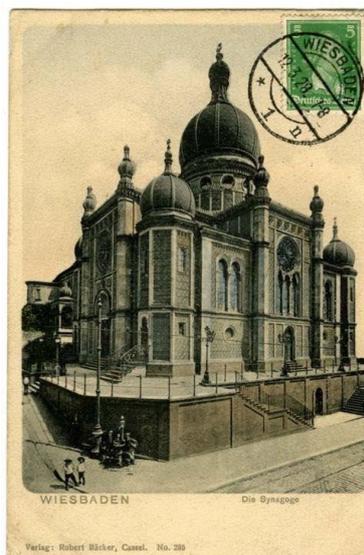
Das Millionentestament (*Ps. Heinz Letton, 1932*) - Meyer & Co. (*M. mit Willy Rosen/Ps. Heinz Lewin, 1931*) - Moritz macht sein Glück (*M. mit Willy Rosen, 1931*)

Tomorrow the municipality of Wiesbaden will be commemorating and honouring the memory of Heinz Lewin at a ceremony in the Town Hall.

130 years since he was born, it will be a chance for my mother to speak about the grandfather she never knew;

for me to recite a memorial prayer in a place where Judaism was eradicated;

and as his music is played, for Heinz to be celebrated as a German Jewish Composer, not just commemorated as a Jewish victim of German hate and genocide.



5<sup>th</sup> June 2018

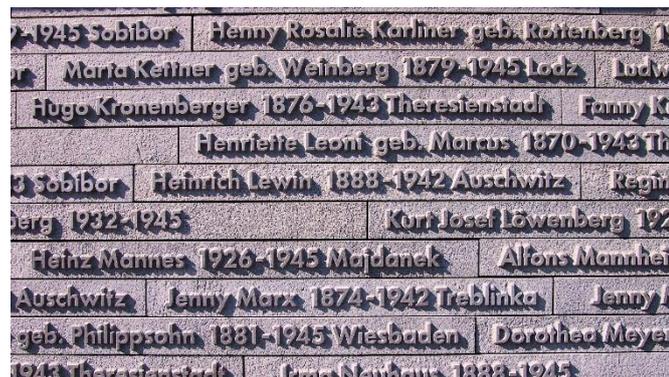
First stop in Wiesbaden was the cemetery to visit my great great grandparents Moshe and Chaya Lewin. There are also more distant family members named on the memorial to the fallen in WW1.



We visited the old family home and premises of the family business - Menes Cigaretten, a cigarette factory. It was one of the early adopters of football cards.

The Holocaust memorial wall spans the site of the old shul destroyed on Kristallnacht. My great grandfather is listed under his given name, Heinrich.

Today begins with the commemoration at the Town Hall.



6<sup>th</sup> June 2018

A room had been set aside in the Wiesbaden Town Hall adjacent to the permanent Shoah memorial room for the commemoration of my great-grandfather Heinz Lewin. It had been advertised in the Wiesbaden paper.



The director of the Aktives Museum, which runs projects on the Shoah and the historical and cultural contributions of German Jewry gave an account of Heinz's life, beginning with

his parents' cigarette factory, which he went on to manage, his early compositions and concerts, the operettas, the success which took him to Berlin, the film scores, his need to publish under a less Jewish sounding under a pen-name (Henry Letton), his escape to France, capture, the concerts he directed as a prisoner and then his transport to Auschwitz and death.



His music was performed, and Heinz Lewin came to life. The music is jolly, some of the lyrics risqué, some Yiddish interspersed with the German. The organisers and the musicians, who were not Jewish, certainly put their hearts into giving life to his spirit and the elevation of his soul.

The most moving aspects of the commemoration for me were watching my mother's joy and tears as the music was played; and then hearing her deliver her address in flawless German; a reflection on the grandfather she had never known. As she finished she was greeted with a thoroughly deserved standing ovation.



Heinz will be featured in the display in the memorial room through June. On the first Tuesday of each month, two victims' stories are shared – so that the exhibition remains ever changing and personal.

In the evening, there was a screening in the local cinema of Geheimnis des Blauen Zimmers (The Secret of the Blue Room), one of several films where he wrote the score, or his music was featured. There are a number of films like this which were first made in German and subsequently re-shot in Hollywood.



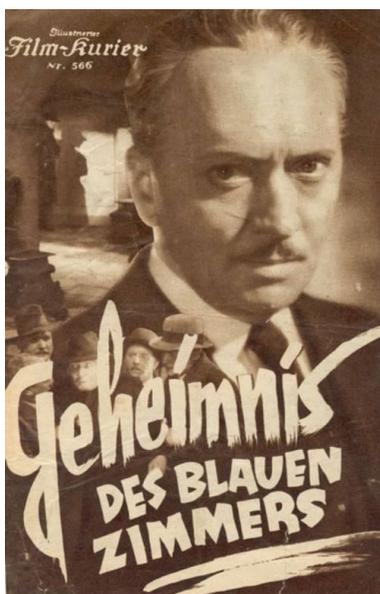
Heinz's son, my Opa, was also a pianist and composer. My mother and I grew up hearing him play. The piano piece in the film exactly matches my Opa's style. Closing our eyes we can hear him playing... and there is every reason to suppose that it is Heinz's fingers on the piano keys in the recording... We can imagine...

Many a tear was shed. Several participants and also journalists who came to speak to me and my mother afterwards apologised, not so much for what had happened... but for the fact that racism and anti-Semitism is on the rise again.



The commemoration highlighted one significant lesson: "Us" and "Them" is a story of persecution and death – but yesterday as we celebrated Heinz as a German Jewish composer, we told a colourful story of German Jewish life. It was us, our culture and our past...

One story in six million... How many were murdered for whom there are no grandchildren or great grandchildren to take up their cause? Whole villages slaughtered, and no-one knows they were ever born... How many folios of music and manuscripts of wisdom were lost for all time?



I return home, inspired and exhilarated to have come so close to my great grandfather; having prayed at his parents' graves, seen where they lived and worked, where he was born... having heard his music come to life... and understanding all the more how much we have all lost.