

Podcast #1

Born in Prague in 1894 and victim to tuberculosis in the Wulzburg Concentration camp in 1942, composer Erwin Schulhoff's early years in Cologne add musical spice to the exhibition *Angelika Hoerle: Cologne Comet of Dada*.

Anton Dvorak predicted a great future for piano prodigy Erwin Schulhoff who arrived as an 18 year old in Cologne in 1912 to study music. Although Schulhoff was in the field for the Austro-Hungarian Empire during WWI, Cologne was his base until 1919. He there acquired a network of acquaintances who inspired his compositions and influenced his leftist political leanings.

Although it cannot be documented that Schulhoff visited the Gereon Club in Cologne in 1912, his later connections to composer Arnold Schoenberg who exhibited his art there and Theodor Daebler, who recited his poetry there, make a good case for Schulhoff having visited this nexus for Cologne's avant-garde. The Cafe Luna, a hot spot that attracted Cologne's pre-war artistic forces--critics, writers, entrepreneurs, artists and musicians--would have been another magnet for Schulhoff. The future Dada-bard Johannes Theodor Kuhlemann and art-entrepreneur Karl Nierendorf, both featuring significantly in Schulhoff's Cologne stay, were frequent visitors at the Cafe Luna.

Kuhlemann inscribed his pre-war poems, *Landschaften (Landscapes)*, with the words: "to Heinrich Hoerle's cubistic cycle" The handwritten 1916 manuscript is in the AGO exhibition. By 1918 Schulhoff had set *Landscapes* to music. Schulhoff also set Daebler poems to music in 1919, calling the piece *Menscheit (Humanity)*.

The changes in Schulhoff's compositions between Kuhlemann's *Landscapes* and Daebler's *Humanity* are dramatic. War changed Schulhoff. The titles of his works between 1915 and 1919 suggest a progression of feelings not unlike that experienced by the visual artists from Cologne who went to war--*Fugues, Grotesques, Burlesques, Pitturesques*.

In 1915 Schulhoff wrote *Three Fugues*. The musical term "fugue", which refers to a theme repeated in a variety of patterns, fits well the first realizations of war being played out in different ways. By 1917, when those at war had progressed to horrified consciousness of the atrocities that stretched before them, Schulhoff wrote *Five Grotesques*. By 1918, when trench warfare was joined by the Spanish Influenza pandemic, even the grotesque was transcended. Schulhoff composed *Five Burlesques*. His *Pitturesques*, dedicated to Georg Grosz contained a heavily scored silent movement (sometimes called *In Futurum*)--*burlesque had given way to absurdity*..

After demobilization, Schulhoff returned to a Cologne arts scene operating under British Occupation. Undaunted by the strictures of Occupation, art entrepreneur, Karl Nierendorff, founded the Gesellschaft der Kuenste (called the GDK), which was the Cologne arm of Berlin's Arbeitsrat fuer Kunst. The radical organizations in Berlin and Cologne were made up of artists, poets, architects and musicians striving to make a new Germany arise phoenix-like from the ashes of the discredited pre-war establishment.

The forces to renew the Rhineland arts scene got off to a quick start. In Jan 1919 an evening featuring modern piano pieces took place at the Hotel Disch in Cologne. The newspaper reviewer called Schoenberg's Opus 11 a formless sound brew. Undaunted by this criticism, Nierendorff hosted the GDK's first music event--a Mahler Matinee in the Rococo Salon of the Hotel Ditsch with Otto Klemperer wielding the baton and female pianist Lonny Epstein at the keyboards Mar 19, 1919. Also in March Johannes Theodor Kuhlemann, developed his theme "The Symphonic in Poetry" for the GDK. Mar 30th the GDK held a Chamber Music Matinee with first performances of works by Pfitzner and Debussy--an event Schulhoff definitely would have attended as he had had private lessons from Debussy.

The Cologne arts scene was humming along in 1919, but, many artists, including the Hoerles, Max Ernst, Johannes Theodor Kuhlemann, Otto Freundlich, Willy Fick and Erwin Schulhoff, to name some, felt it was not enough. The pre-war arts establishment was retaining and even gaining power, keeping the arts as their private commercial enclave. It was time to break loose.

For the artists like Angelika and Heinrich Hoerle and Max Ernst breaking loose meant political cartoons in the *Socialist Republic* newspaper and work for its leftist arts supplement *Ventilator*. It meant the Dada Room called Section D, a breakaway from the Cologne Arts Institute exhibition Nierendorf had arranged for Nov 1919. It meant breaking curfew to placard Cologne with original art. For Schulhoff, after a visit to Berlin it meant compositions like the one ones excerpted on track 3 in the AGO exhibition.

In *Symphonie Germanica* (1919) Schulhoff provides a jeering rendition of what we today recognize as the German national anthem. Imagine the outrage if *Oh Canada* was mocked in this way. The melody for *Song of the Germans*, also known as *Deutschland ueber Alles*, was first composed by Joseph Haydn in 1797; it became Germany's national song when it was adopted by the Weimar Republic in 1922. In 1919 the song stood for the German establishment and German chauvinism and that's what Schulhoff tears into. Schulhoff's *Germanica* seemingly brewed in the same coffee house mill as a drawing in the special October 1919 edition of *Socialist Republic*, titled *The New Germania*, puts disgust for the establishment in audio form. As you listen to the excerpt, picture Germania as a sausage like woman in riding boots with a whip and medals, standing before countless graves--mostly of workers and soldiers. The bestial head of the demonic female bears a diminutive crown saying, "the goal of the revolution" not unlike the title of Angelika's ironically titled political cartoon, *The goals of the revolution have been attained*, in the same edition of the newspaper. Clearly Schulhoff and Angelika were disappointed with the war and revolution.

In *Sonata Erotica* of 1919 (subtitled for men only) Schulhoff musically scores a sexual encounter in the voice of a female. Only a few seconds of this work make the same spoofing point as Angelika in *Rider*--that being that women should not be considered sexual objects--that perception was 'for men only'.

Schulhoff *Wolkenpumpe* has a Cologne history going back to 1914 when Schulhoff probably met Hans Arp. Arp visited the Cologne Werkbund exhibition of applied arts shortly before the war. Max Ernst states that Arp read his preliminary poems for *Wolkenpumpe* (Cloud Pump) in 1914 to those in the Cologne arts scene, possibly the locale was the popular Cafe Luna. Schulhoff's 1921 *Wolkenpumpe*,

dedicated to the Holy Spirit of Hans Arp, shows his Dada influence from Berlin. The work begins with a loud declamation similar to the one that starts his 1921 work, *Suite for Chamber Orchestra*:

Grant me unheard-of-powers

I will eat you all

Into the sausage machine with you

Band of pigs!!!

Then, then comes the moment in the Cosmos

When I will be transformed in Bayer Aspirin!

Wolkenpumpe's and *Suite for Chamber Orchestra's* beginning Dada incantations show why Schulhoff is considered the most Dada of composers. However, after his introductory chant, Schulhoff's 1921 *Suite for Chamber Orchestra* presents six dance movements that reflect popular culture more than Dada: Ragtime, Valse Boston, Tango, Shimmy, Step and Jazz. Schulhoff, who took part in Berlin's DADA music events, was not however done with Dada. In his 1924 *Hot Sonata*, also called his "Jazz Concerto" in a section marked *allegro alla Jazz* Schulhoff uses a siren, car horn, anvil, cowbells, rattle, tam-tam, Japanese drum and other wild percussion paraphernalia--all attempting to break with the musical conventions of the establishment.

During what remained of the Roaring Twenties, Schulhoff toured as a celebrated pianist in Germany, France and England while continuing to compose. As well as showcasing virtuosity in his classical repertoire, Schulhoff worked as a jazz pianist and improviser in Europe's hot jazz clubs. These good times ended as the decade ended. As Hitler rose, Schulhoff became progressively more radical in his politics. In 1932 he set the *Communist Manifesto* to music in a cantata for soloists, chorus and horns. In 1933 he wrote songs for a soloist titled *1917* after the year of the Russian Revolution. As a Jew and a communist Schulhoff was doubly branded degenerate. Schulhoff fled to Czechoslovakia where between 1933 and his death he composed his last five symphonies. He dedicated *Symphony #3* to hunger strikers in Slovakia and *Symphony #4* to fighters in the Spanish Civil War. Although Schulhoff took Soviet citizenship he did not emigrate. He was arrested the day after the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. He died of tuberculosis in the Wulzburg Concentration Camp in 1942. He had started his 8th Symphony.