

HANS WINTERBERG (1901-1991)

The rediscovery of a master of modernity

The Czech-German composer of Jewish origin, Hans Winterberg, is currently only known to a few music lovers. But that was not always the case and the new reception of his work has already started.

From the 1950s to the early 1980s, he was present in German music life. Many of his compositions were performed and were recorded and broadcast in particular by the Bavarian Radio. Very good recordings from this period, including the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra (Fritz Rieger, with Gitti Pirner), the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra (Joseph Strobl) and others are available. Publications on CD are planned.

Hans Winterberg composed continuously and with extraordinary creativity into old age. After his death in 1991, however, his work remained inaccessible to the public. For many years it was stored in the Sudeten German Music Archive, Regensburg, with a blocking notice.

The story of rediscovery is worth telling and looking at in detail. Guided by childhood memories of a radio broadcast with music by Hans Winterberg, the composer's grandson, goldsmith Peter Kreitmeir, investigated his grandfather's work, which he had never met personally. Against considerable resistance, he was given access to the estate: 10,000 manuscript pages, including the scores and parts of several orchestral works, piano concerts, chamber music for different instrumentation, a large number of sophisticated compositions for piano and theoretical writings were scanned in by himself after he secured the publishing rights.

He handed over the entire work to the *exil.art center*, the renowned institute at the Vienna University of Applied Sciences, which concentrates on the recording and processing of legacies of Jewish musicians regarded as 'degenerate' or persecuted in the Third Reich. The experts around the musicologist and producer Michael Haas quickly realized that it was a complete work of exceptional scope and great independent quality.

"What ... comes across as strongly as the pure exuberance and energy of his music, is the melodic and harmonic inventiveness. We are not dealing with atonality, 12-tone, or even with alienating degrees of poly-tonality. In this respect, Winterberg was not a creature of Germany's post-war musical establishment. There is enormous atmosphere and beauty brought together in a highly expressive language that speaks boldly and openly to the listener. In short, this is music we cannot afford to ignore and nobody ever had the right to suppress. "(Dr. Michael Haas)

Since then, the rediscovery of the composer Hans Winterberg has been widespread. Musicians worldwide perform and study his work, in 2016 a festival dedicated to Winterberg's chamber music was held in the USA and several CDs are in preparation or have already been released. In the works of the composer a world of deep seriousness opens up to the listener, joy in the carefully elaborated work, fascination for lively tonality and enthusiasm for polyrhythmic complexity.