

International Conference

29. – 31. January 2020

Eastern European Emigrants and the Internationalisation of 20th-Century Music Concepts

Intercultural transfers have always played a crucial role in music history. However, the 20th century in particular was one characterized by the global exchange of musical concepts and techniques. Emigration was a strong catalyst for these processes, especially with regard to artists from Eastern Europe, beginning with and even before the Russian October Revolution. An international conference at the Musicological Institute of Leipzig University (29-31 January 2020), organized by Anna Fortunova and Stefan Keym, brought together 17 musicologists and other researchers from Russia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, France and Germany to rethink the relationship between the emigration of artists and scholars from Eastern Europe and the globalization of ideas.

In his keynote lecture, Christoph Flamm (Lübeck/Heidelberg) highlighted not only the negative aspects of (mostly forced) emigration, but also its positive results as an enrichment for the host culture. In her presentation on the Russian art magazine *Jar-Ptiza (Firebird)*, Anna Fortunova looked at cultural transfers in 1920s Berlin. Jascha Nemtsov (Weimar/Potsdam) also dealt with Berlin, which was one of the most important Russian-Jewish cultural centers at that time. Wendelin Bitzan's (Düsseldorf) pointed out, using the example of the Russian composer Nikolai Medtner, how important timing was for the 'success' of an emigration. Márton Kerékfy (Budapest) emphasized that György Ligeti, especially in his later compositions, alludes in a nostalgic way both to Hungarian folk music and to his own early pieces that were written while he was still in his home country. In his lecture on popular music during the Cold War, Michael G. Esch (Berlin) showed how jazz was adopted by the cultural and political elite in several Eastern European countries, losing its oppositional character in the process.

Artistic and scientific networks were the focus of many presentations, for example Georgy Kovalevski's (Saint Petersburg) paper on the philosopher and musicologist Ivan Lapshin, who emigrated to Prague. Marina Lupishko (Le Havre) dealt with Igor Stravinsky's cooperation with painters in Paris. Two lecturers, Lidia Ader (St. Petersburg) and Rima Povilionienė (Vilnius), took a closer look at quarter-tone music, and Olesya Bobrik (Moscow) spoke about Arthur Lourié in France. Rūta Stanevičūtė (Vilnius) and Jolanta Guzy-Pasiak (Warsaw) focused on Lithuanian and Polish émigré composers in the USA. Jernej Weiss (Ljubljana/Maribor) reported on Czech musicians in Slovenia, especially during the interwar period. Dörte Schmidt (Berlin) presented a panorama of international relationships at the postwar avant-garde composition courses in Darmstadt.

In the final discussion, Stefan Keym highlighted some results of the conference: Firstly, there was great diversity in the aesthetics as well as in the careers of the émigrés. Secondly, geographical mappings should always be questioned, since the very terms "Eastern" and "Western Europe" depend on the point of view and cannot be clearly defined. Thirdly, the different perspectives and narratives from which the life and creative paths of the emigrated composers were experienced and portrayed should be taken into account. Finally, the success of an émigré's integration into and interaction with his or her host culture depended largely on the needs of the latter, as the theory of intercultural transfer has pointed out.

(Anna Fortunova)