

HANS GLENEWINKEL: A KEY RESEARCHER

by Martin Wulfhorst, adapted by Keith Warsop

OF all the studies of Spohr's music produced by the generation of musicologists who turned their attention to the composer in the first three decades of this century, Hans Glenewinkel's *Spohr's Chamber Music for String Instruments. A Contribution to the History of the String Quartet in the Nineteenth Century (Spohrs Kammermusik für Streichinstrumente. Zur Geschichte des Streichquartetts im XIX. Jahrhundert)* was the most valuable, though it has been largely ignored, especially outside Germany; in one stroke it placed Spohr scholarship on a high level. Therefore, the scope, goals and methods of Glenewinkel's study deserve discussion in some detail.

A student of Adolf Sandberger, whose *Zur Geschichte des Haydn'schen Streichquartetts* (1900) provided the foundation for research on the classical string quartet, Glenewinkel studied Spohr's chamber music in the context of the stylistic development of the quartet.

He limited his investigation to Spohr's multi-movement chamber works for four to eight strings, that is, his 36 quartets and 12 works in related genres (seven quintets, one sextet and four double quartets) so the title of his book is slightly misleading as he excludes the duets as well as the variations and potpourris for four and five strings.

The core of his book consists of detailed analyses of the 48 compositions and discussions of their genesis, editions, arrangements, transcriptions, performances, reception and aesthetic significance.

Glenewinkel's most important contribution, though, lies in his synthesis of the individual analyses which is the first attempt at a comprehensive description of the development and characteristics of Spohr's style. His detailed knowledge of Spohr's chamber music for strings, in combination with his analytic perception, enabled him to establish, for the first time, a division of Spohr's compositional activity into periods and to give a well-founded evaluation of his chamber music for four to eight strings. His work has retained much of its validity and has not been superseded during the 77 years since its publication (in 1912).

However, since the organisation of Glenewinkel's dissertation is neither entirely consistent nor immediately obvious (chapter headings are found only in the table of contents, not in the text), a few clarifying remarks are necessary here.

There are surveys of the histories of the four individual genres (quartet pp.12-20; double quartet pp.88-90; quintet pp.99-100; sextet p.116).

Analyses of Spohr's individual works are found in the central portion: 1. "The Quartets" pp.21-87; 2. "The Double Quartets" pp.90-98; 3. "The Quintets" pp.100-113; 4. "The Sextet" pp.114-117.

The last part ("Synthesis") is organised as follows: 1. "Summary of the Stylistic Development according to Periods" pp.117-127; 2. "Basic Stylistic Elements" pp.127-139; 3. "Critical Evaluation" pp.139-150.

Glenewinkel's analytic method was of his time; unlike many modern analysts, he did not refrain from value judgments and interpretations of emotional content. A short translation can give the reader a flavour of his language:

"The main idea [in Op.30:1] consists of an expressive cantilena of joyfully tender, one can say, amorous, colouring. The erotic undertone is revealed even more clearly by the longing, languishing motive of the transitional section ..." (Page 40).

Glenewinkel seems to have developed his musical sense, which formed the basis for his value judgments, during the “longer period of work as a practical musician” (Page 45) which preceded his academic studies.

Modern musicologists might be inclined to ridicule some of Glenewinkel’s language, yet they have to acknowledge his intimate knowledge of Spohr’s music, his keen sense of musical quality, and his ability to keep the music in the forefront of his discussion. What will continue to elicit admiration and appreciation is his enormous commitment to Spohr; together with his brother Hermann he copied scores for 42 Spohr works which had been printed only in parts (they do not include the four double quartets which had been published in score in the 19th century).

Several of Glenewinkel’s scores have more recently provided the basis for new editions while much information uncovered by Glenewinkel was able to be adopted by Folker Göthel when he compiled his Spohr thematic catalogue.

Glenewinkel’s achievements make him one of the most important pioneers of Spohr research.

- This article has been adapted by Keith Warsop from part of Dr Martin Wulfhorst’s doctoral dissertation on Spohr’s Chamber Music for Strings.

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