

Music in Kassel

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History of the academy of music of Kassel

The **beginnings** of the present academy of music have their roots in private institutions, which offered a musical education for the citizens of Kassel during the first decades of the 20th century.

The “**Conservatorium Kassel**”, that was founded by the Boyer sisters in 1895, emphasized instrumental lessons. Next to it, the “**Steinsche Conservatorium**”, founded by the musical director Heinrich Stein in 1904, was important until Stein’s death in 1922. It existed until 1942. After the (earlier) “**Spohr company**”, that existed until 1934, was founded with the collaboration of Stein in 1908, its name was changed in “**Spohr Conservatorium**” in 1909. Today’s Louis-Spohr-company was constituted in 1952.

Whereas the two conservatories address musical laymen, **the courses of Miss Minna Ritz** concentrated for the first time on the education of private music teachers since 1912. This education is continued as a broader professional basis in the music seminars of the imperial federation of German audio artists and music teachers in the local association of Kassel.

At the 1st of October 1939 Kassel’s conservatory and the music seminar were combined to the so called “Conservatory and music seminar of the city of Kassel”, while before that, they were both single companies that worked on the basis of a private and voluntary professional consolidation. 1942 the “Spohr-conservatory” joined in. So, in Kassel existed an urban institution of musical education for professionals and laymen for the first time. Such a system already existed in many other German cities since the second half of the 19th century.

That musical professional education is the job of a public institution is taken for granted nowadays. The idea to offer lessons for laymen in terms of musical schools, as it is expressed in the former expression “conservatory”, is not a matter of debate anymore. But the foundation corresponded to what was in the former ideology known as “cooptation” and so erased any independent development of music teachers. Fred K. Prieberg had demonstrated very well, that private musical professionalism was impossible without the membership in the Reich Chamber of Music up to the extreme that the membership was even considered obligatory for itinerant musicians.

Karl Vötterle (1903-1975), who was the founder and for a long time also the owner of the Bärenreiter-Press, reports in his book “House Under The Star”, how he had organized under great difficulties a lecture event in the autumn of 1943. The responsible Gauleiter had refused the lecture as an event of the company, but he actually let it take place, because the **NSDAP** applied the prepared things and played the part of the organizer. So, it is obvious to see, that a music teacher had nearly no chance to do a meaningful work on his own initiative. Concerning the cultural and educational policy during that time, the foundation of the conservatory and the music seminar of the city of Kassel was a condition sine qua non. The positive aspect, the foundation of a public institution, was leveled through the suppression of private opportunities.

Moreover, the time of the foundation, which was four weeks after the outbreak of World War II, offered hardly any chances for a meaningful rebuilding work. During the attack on Kassel on 22th October 1943, the scripts about the academy of music (and others), which were stored in the townhall and the city archive, got lost. In the academy of music itself, that survived the war undamaged, the library holdings outlasted three preceding institutes. Indications of concerts have not survived the years of war. After the war, the importance of the academy increased very fast. In 1955 the conservatory of Kassel was appointed “ **Academy of Music of The City of Kassel**” by the decree of the Hessian Minister of Education and National Culture.