

JOSEF HAUER (1883–1959)

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Austrian composer and theorist Josef Matthias Hauer was born March 19, 1883, in Wiener Neustadt, just outside Vienna. Hauer's father Matthias Hauer worked as a prison supervisor but was also an amateur musician. He instructed the young Josef in music as the son learned to play the zither. Hauer was later to write that he had learned from his father all that was essential to know about music, and learned it between the ages of five and ten. He attended the Wiener Neustadt Teacher Training Institute from 1897 to 1902, earning his certificate as an elementary school teacher in 1904. Hauer graduated along with the philosopher Ferdinand Ebner, and Hauer's continued friendship with Ebner had a strong impact on the former's musical and intellectual development. He taught in elementary schools in Krumbach, St. Pölten, and Wiener Neustadt before being given medical retirement in 1919. During World War I, Hauer was assigned office duty in Vienna; he moved to the Austrian capital in 1915 and remained there until his death on September 22, 1959.

While he had been active as an organist, choral conductor, and cellist since his teenage years, Hauer's earliest compositions seem to date from around 1908. Hauer's early published works, opuses 1–18 (1912–1919)—which he described retrospectively as the “first onset of my twelve-tone music”—are mostly chromatic yet still tonal or modal, though some passages also explore atonality in a manner loosely similar to the contemporary music of Arnold Schoenberg and Anton Webern. These early pieces range from songs and piano miniatures to the dramatic *Apokalyptische Phantasie*, op. 5 (1913), which is scored for chamber orchestra and his most significant early work.

Vienna throughout the period between the world wars was a hotbed of artistic and intellectual activity, and during this time Hauer associated with the Schoenberg circle, as well as with Peter Altenberg, Hermann Bahr, Karl Kraus, Adolf Loos, and Johannes Itten. Hauer's most important association was with Ebner, who worked with Hauer on the composer's first music-theoretical work *Über*

die Klangfarbe, and who later published a lengthy analysis of Hauer's opus 5. Ebner's theology—especially as it is articulated in his *Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten*, which Hauer copied for publication—provided an important impetus to Hauer's discovery of the "twelve-tone law" in August 1919.

Throughout his career as a composer, Hauer thought of music as a means to spiritual contemplation—music as a window that opens onto the spiritual realm. But Ebner had argued that all art falls short of such revelation, since ultimately an artwork is only ever a reflection of the artist him- or herself: the artist mistakenly claims a spiritual I-Thou relationship for an experience that is more accurately thought of as an I-I relationship. To a certain extent, Hauer was sympathetic to this position inasmuch as a piece of music in the European art-music tradition can be seen as a composer's personal expression. Hauer thought instead music should arise through a composer in the most unmediated manner possible, and when he hit on the principle of constantly and systematically circulating all twelve notes, he believed he had discovered the realm in which music could transcend the personal and attain the spiritual.

His first pieces after discovering the twelve-tone law were not strictly twelve tone, however. Initially, Hauer attempted to control the number of pitches that would be circulated before the same one was reused, and his *Nomos*, op. 19 (1919), contains sections that employ collections of eight- to twelve-pitch classes. Exclusively twelve-tone passages occur at important structural points, and the opening bars employ five statements of a twelve-tone row in twelve monophonic phrases of five notes each. Hauer soon employed twelve-tone collections only, and his works from opus 20 forward explore a broad range of approaches to twelve-tone structure. In the twenty-year-period between 1919 and 1939, Hauer wrote over seventy works—many of which are multimovement pieces—including operas, song cycles, chamber and symphonic music, and piano collections.

Schoenberg held Hauer's ideas in high regard in the early and mid-1920s, and Hauer's music—including opus 19—was performed in the Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen. The two composers for a time discussed the idea of jointly authoring a book, and even of opening a school for twelve-tone composition. Hauer's new ideas about the role of the composer, however, differed markedly from those of Schoenberg, Alban Berg, and Webern, who held to the traditional role of the composer as expressive artist. Hauer continued to argue that the composer's role was to suppress any will to personal expression in music and to work only at expressing the spiritual truth inherent in the twelve notes themselves; he eventually went so far as to reject the title of composer, thinking of himself instead as an "interpreter of the twelve tones."

While Hauer claimed to have been the first to compose music in full consciousness of the twelve-tone law, he is among the most important early writers in twelve-tone music theory and aesthetics. His *Vom Wesen des Musikalischen* was first published in 1920 and in it he clearly states that a piece should employ all twelve notes before any is sounded again. In this work, as well as in his

Deutung des Melos (1923) and in many short articles written during the early 1920s, Hauer argues for the superiority of atonal over tonal music, grounding his claims by offering support drawn from acoustics, culture, and spiritual studies. By late 1921, he had discovered the forty-four tropes—hexachord pairs that exhaust the twelve tones—and trope classification subsequently became an important aspect of Hauer's understanding of atonal pitch structure. Years before the twelve-tone theoretical writing of Herbert Eimert, Erwin Stein, and Fritz Heinrich Klein, Hauer had set forth the basic principles of his approach in print. His many theoretical writings—including detailed discussions of the tropes in numerous musical examples appearing in his *Vom Melos zur Pauke* (1925, dedicated to Schoenberg) and *Zwölftontechnik* (1926)—have unfortunately led to misconceptions about his middle-period music, pieces that are often characterized as mere exemplars of his trope theory. While it is true that a number of Hauer's musical works between opuses 20 and 89 employ pairs of unordered hexachords, there are also a significant number that employ an ordered series, and in those employing a series there is frequently some systematic process of rotation at work as well.

Two representative examples of Hauer's middle-period practice are his opuses 25 and 54. Inspired by the poetry of Friedrich Hölderlin, Hauer's opus 25 is a collection of sixteen short pieces for solo piano. The first piece, *Deine Wellen umspielten mich*, is based on a single trope—in this case the thirty-first trope. The trope appears at all twelve possible transposition levels, the first six transpositions being based on one of the two whole-tone scales, while the next six are based on the other. Having employed all twelve transpositions, the piece ends at the same transposition at which it began. Here on a small scale one can clearly detect Hauer's concern for the twelve-tone law as both a principle of local structure (each trope) and as a determinant of large-scale form (the transposition scheme). Hauer's *Violinkonzert*, op. 54 (1928), employs an ordered twelve-tone row as its structural point of departure. Through a systematic procedure of rotation at both local and long-term levels of structure, Hauer sets a lengthy process in motion that is ultimately not completed in the course of the piece. Yet all material for the piece is derived from the constantly mutating row, and the tropes are not of especial importance in this case.

Throughout his music-theoretical writing, Hauer grounds his technical discussion in his belief in the spiritual essence of atonal music. Appealing to the authority of Johann Goethe's *Farbenlehre*, Hauer argues throughout his *Vom Wesen des Musikalischen*, for instance, that atonal music exists on a higher spiritual level than tonal music, and that the most perfect form of atonal music employs all twelve notes in equal proportion. He places "Melos" (pure atonal melody) above "Rhythmus" (the rhythmic drumming on a single tone) and argues as well for music's superiority over language as a mode of coming to spiritual truth (another aspect of the Hauer's reaction to Ebner's philosophy). Hauer's references to Goethe's scientific writing—likely under the influence of Rudolf Steiner's interpretations—and to Chinese philosophy throughout his the-

oretical work also suggest that Hauer was influenced by the various esoteric and occult movements that had flourished in Vienna since the late nineteenth century. His argument in favor of the spiritual nature of the twelve tones is a good example. Hauer points out that the twelve equal-tempered notes do not arise naturally in nature (and here he follows Goethe's argument that the entire color spectrum does not exist in nature). The equal-tempered twelve tones are instead the result of a "spiritualization" of what nature provides—a way of rising above the coarse material of the physical realm into the perfect realm of the spiritual. One perceives this more-spiritual twelve-tone music through "intuitive hearing"—extending Arthur Schopenhauer's musical aesthetics by way of Steiner's esoteric reading of Goethean science, one "hears into" the realm of the spiritual.

Since turning to twelve-tone composition in 1919, Hauer had struggled to reject in practice what he had denounced in theory; despite his often severe pronouncements about overcoming the impulse to personal expression in music, he tended to remain within conventional genres, writing concertos, string quartets, and so on. But by the end of the 1930s, Hauer moved into the final stage of his career—one marked unmistakably by a clear and complete renunciation of personal expression in music. After 1939, he wrote nothing but pieces he termed "Zwölftonspiele," most of which are identified only by the date of their completion, though a few of these carry specific titles. Hauer often sent completed Zwölftonspiele to friends, and it is thus impossible to know how many of these pieces were actually composed, though it is likely that he wrote over one thousand in the period between 1940 and his death in 1959. The Zwölftonspiele was devoted to an objective contemplation of the twelve notes that makes few concessions to the norms of European art music. In constructing a Zwölftonspiele, Hauer began with a twelve-tone row, often derived through some chance procedure. He then used this ordered series to arrive at a "Kontinuum"—a sequence of twelve four-note chords in which one note changes from chord to chord. This Kontinuum is then subjected to any number of technical manipulations in order to bring out aspects of its twelve-tone structure. With its almost mechanical procedures for generating a musical surface from an underlying tone row, the Zwölftonspiele is more akin to a meditation exercise than to a composition, and the various technical procedures employed can be thought of as lenses through which one may contemplate the twelve-tone universe. In this last phase of his career, Hauer no longer wrote music that could be considered "compositions" in any traditional sense: these truly were twelve-tone contemplations.

One consequence of Hauer's struggle to renounce personal expression in his music is that his pieces do not strike even the trained listener as particularly interesting compositions. They often seem rather plain and amateurish, lacking the powerful expressive impulse that marks so much of the music of his Viennese contemporaries, such as Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg. And if one follows Hauer's thinking about what these pieces are meant to be, the answer to redressing the neglect they have suffered over the years would not be to have

them played in concert more often, since that would only encourage an inappropriate set of expectations—those associated with the European art-music tradition (though things are certainly better in this regard at the beginning of this century than they were at the beginning of the last!). It is thus perhaps most fitting that Hauer's music has been taken up primarily as a musical practice in which new pieces, most often *Zwölftonspiele*, are constantly produced by students seeking to enter into the world of twelve-tone music as something like a lifestyle. At the Josef Matthias Hauer Musikhochschule in Wiener Neustadt, Robert Michael Weiss continues to teach Hauer's music and theories as did his teacher, the Viennese Hauer student Victor Sokolowski, before him.

Though Hauer's historical importance is as a music theorist, he received numerous awards for his compositions during his lifetime. In addition to performances of his works in the 1920s, Hauer was awarded the Vienna Artist's Prize in 1927 and from 1930 was paid a state honorarium. Ironically, Hauer's music was pronounced decadent by the National Socialists in the 1930s, and some of his scores were included in the touring exhibition of "degenerate art" at about this same time. There was renewed interest in his work in Vienna for a time after World War II, and Hauer was accorded honorary membership in the Vienna Konzerthausgesellschaft, awarded the title of professor (1954), and received the Major Austrian State Prize (1955).

SELECTED WORKS

Apokalyptische Phantasie, op. 5, for chamber orchestra (1913)

Nomos, op. 19, for piano (1919)

Hölderlin Lieder, op. 21, for voice and piano (1922)

Violinkonzert, op. 54, for piano and orchestra (1928)

Der Menschen Weg, Kantate in sieben Teilen nach Worten von Friedrich Hölderlin, op. 67, for four soloists, mixed choir, and orchestra (1934)

Zwölftönspiel I für Orchester (1940)

Perhaps one thousand *Zwölftonspiele* written during 1939–1959

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