



## Report COZ 8: 11 August 2020, David Fligg with Eva Fox-Gál

Report by Michael Haas with notes from David and Eva

	<p><b>COZ 8: Tuesday 11 August 2020</b> <b>David Fligg</b> Tutor in Academic Studies at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, and author of the 2019 Czech publication (<i>Letter from Gideon</i>), the first full-length biography on Klein in a quarter of a century</p> <p><b>Eva Fox Gal</b> Daughter of Austrian composer Hans Gál, instigator of the Hans Gál Society and editor of many of his books</p> <p><b>Post-Holocaust fracture: The challenges of reintegrating the music of Hans Gál and Gideon Klein into the canon</b></p>	
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The subject was a discussion between Eva Fox-Gál, the daughter of the composer Hans Gál and David Fligg, whose new biography on the composer Gideon Klein has just been published in Czech, with an English edition coming out soon with Toccata Press, on **The challenges of reintegrating the music of Hans Gál and Gideon Klein into the canon**. The COZ meeting had at its highest point some 45 people in attendance.



The discussion opened with questions as to how two very different biographies were to be presented. Gideon Klein (left) (6 December 1919 – c. January 1945) a Czech pianist, **composer**, educator and organizer of cultural life at Terezin, was at the very beginning of his musical life when he was murdered having just turned 25 whereas



**Hans Gál** (right) (1890-1987) lived to nearly 100. Gal was a prolific **composer**, teacher and scholar throughout his long life. At the height of his powers and his popularity, he was forced to leave Germany and Austria, never again able to achieve the cultural significance he had enjoyed during the years of the Weimar Republic. He came to the UK to before the war, was interned on the Isle of Man, and worked in Edinburgh as a musicologist, and scholar as well as continuing to compose all his life.

As David mentioned, Klein was being discovered while Gál was being re-discovered. This was a point that Eva only partially agreed with, pointing out that there was a brief time, shortly after the war, when Hans Gal's music was being rediscovered and well received. She gave the example of a new piece that was broadcast 8 times in the in40s, though this period was short-lived.

Eva went on to explain how her bilingual upbringing led to her interest in European literature and her subsequent teaching position at York University. Her parents felt

themselves to be products of German culture. She also took on the point of “Hausmusik” – music making in the home, playing duets with her father and discovering the string quartet repertoire under his supervision. Klein was a product of new Czechoslovakia: his parents were German speakers but raised their son as a Czech. Despite this, he too was raised in the same German “Hausmusik” tradition.

Eva went on to speak about the problem of availability, affordability and quality of sheet music, a problem compounded in Gál's case, by the multiplicity of publishers, following the dislocation of Gál's life. David mentioned having Klein's works from before internment made available so that these works can become better known. Klein is largely known only by his compositions from Theresienstadt. David's aim is for Klein to be also seen as part of Prague's music scene. This is something which David's book, and the recent Klein Centenary Festival ‘Gido se vrací domů!’ (‘Gido is coming home’) which David curated, has addressed.

As a student Klein also had occasional work as répétiteur and teacher. David mentioned Klein's talent for teaching being a feature of his life in Theresienstadt. The work of “Performing the Jewish Archive” was highlighted as a project that allowed projection of both composers over the past couple of years. A new CD of a cappella works by Gál is about to be released.

Eva mentioned that her father was largely remembered today as a music scholar and musicologist. His first job was cataloguing the Reed Library in Edinburgh, which provided the provenance of Gál's future books. (a half-serious remark made by Gál himself). His book of composer correspondence was mentioned by David as essential reading.

A discussion of “isms” followed establishing the fact that Gál did not follow any “ism” and remained true to his inner-creative voice. The question of “fracturing” within a musical and creative life was addressed, though Eva pointed out that one of the principal moments of “fracture” was Gál's return to Vienna in 1933.

Questions began to be asked such as Gál's attitude towards his Hungarian heritage and his identity as a Jew. Gál is in a process of being re-discovered, the next step for him is for his music to be widely enough appreciated in its own right to be programmed without have to be in the context of ‘victim or ‘exile’ or any label to fit a theme.

The next step of Klein evaluation is placing him in the context of Prague alongside that of Theresienstadt.

Report summary by Michael Haas with notes from Eva and David

Further reading:

<http://www.hansgal.org/>

<http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/theresienstadt/klein-gideon/>

<https://jewishmusicandtheatre.org/works/33>

**Eva Fox-Gal: Additional comments for COZ**

It's important to qualify all that was said with the fundamental difference between a life which was brutally cut short at the outset of a career, and one whose career was broken at its height, never to regain its pre-1933 position, but who nevertheless retained another 54 years of life and creativity. Gál had the inner resilience to continue his work on his terms, despite a cultural environment in the late 50s and 60s (avant-garde expectation, break with the German tradition etc) that became increasingly inimical to everything he represented. Furthermore, the generation of musicians, critics, promoters etc that were educated in this period carried these values forward into the 70s and 80s.

By the time of Gál's death in 1987 the number and quality of performances was declining significantly, with the few remaining performances upheld largely by a few loyal champions who had known him personally. It is only in the last 15 years or so that availability of first-rate recordings of his output in different genres has laid the foundations for actual integration into the canon by making his music more widely accessible.

There is still much to be done regarding availability, accessibility and indeed legibility of sheet music. Gál's dislocation resulted in multiple publishers, none with enough ownership, post-war, to invest sufficiently in the sheet music or its promotion. It was a major career milestone in 1924-29 when he had a contract for first-refusal with Simrock plus a monthly honorarium. All the editions from this period were beautifully printed and engraved. By contrast the modern Simrock editions are copyist handwritten reproductions, paid for by the composer.

Gál's rejection of 'isms' and the fact that he doesn't wholly fit national labels - Austrian, German, British, Scottish, Jewish etc - makes him difficult to pigeon-hole, and this has led him to fall through the cracks of concert and broadcast programming. Reintegrating Gál into the canon requires just that: programming his music among others in the canon.

Eva Fox-Gal [evafoxgal@gmail.com](mailto:evafoxgal@gmail.com)

David Fligg [david.fligg@gmail.com](mailto:david.fligg@gmail.com)

Tanya Fox [tanyafoxgal@hotmail.com](mailto:tanyafoxgal@hotmail.com) The Hans Gal Society