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Chapter 5

Bridging the Great Divides:
Jazz at the Conservatory

Jazz could be a bridge between entertainment music and high art. For it makes not only in technical aspects the highest demands on the performer, it also demands improvisatory, in other words, real musical abilities—entertainment music should not be fought, it should be raised. Its eradication would be utopia.
—Alfred Baresel (1927)

In late 1927, the director of Hoch’s Conservatory in Frankfurt am Main, Bernhard Sekles, issued a circular announcing that a program in jazz instruction, a Jazzklasse, would begin next January at the conservatory. News of Sekles’ plan spread quickly as it moved through the daily press to the German music press, the Prussian state parliament, and even across the Atlantic, where the New York Times recapitulated the debate for its American readership under the somewhat misleading headline, “Jazz Bitterly Opposed in Germany.”1 As the first example of post-secondary education in jazz, in Germany and in Europe, there was something unique to this announcement from Frankfurt am Main. From the point of view of jazz’s opponents, talk of jazz colonizing German music and its institutions no longer appeared mere idle chatter. This very real incursion of jazz into a conservatory pointed to them to the dangers of the contemporary moment. Both American and African, jazz symbolized the absolute worst the contemporary musical world had to offer. Those voices supportive of jazz, on the other hand, viewed in Sekles’ plan a pragmatic approach towards adjusting musical education to the realities of the modern music profession. Specifically, they referred to the large number of musicians who depended on jazz and popular music for their livelihood, without, however, ever having undergone any systematic training in such music. Interestingly, few questioned whether jazz’s translation into the academy would result in something essential about it being lost. For most, it was of little concern whether jazz gained or lost through the
Jazzklasse. It seemed the more pressing question was rather: Did Germany and German music and musicians have anything to gain from it?

Bound up with these particular, musically oriented questions is a number of other, broader cultural thematics of the period. Sekles’ announcement ignited, among others, smoldering debates about the relationship between music and race, the fate of German national identity in modernity, and the division between high and low culture. This chapter will look specifically at the latter question in order to highlight the ways in which the question of “jazz at the conservatory” became a moment of crystallization in this wider discussion. The Jazzklasse debate undoubtedly marks an intensification of the struggle to define the changed and ever-changing relationship between high and low culture. A central cause of much of the acrimony aroused by the Jazzklasse resulted from a generalized anxiety over the apparent disintegration of the boundary between these spheres of art. While such anxiety certainly does not stem exclusively from jazz, throughout the Weimar Republic, this music from across the Atlantic consistently acted to disrupt and problematize long-standing assumptions regarding the division.

As we have seen, during the early 1920s and then with greater intensity after the concerts of Sam Wooding and Paul Whiteman, jazz became a mainstay of German popular music and could be heard, often in its symphonic form, in bars, cabarets, and cafes from Berlin to Frankfurt and beyond. Equally important, however, were developments within so-called art music, symphonies, operas, and other works by contemporary composers that seemed to be drawing increasingly upon the low world of jazz for inspiration, rather than from the three Bs of Bach, Beethoven or Brahms. Paul Hindemith, Darius Milhaud, and George Antheil, not to mention Kurt Weill, all produced works inflected by what they took to be the jazz idiom. And their works were often massively successful. Perhaps no better example of this exists than Ernst Krenek’s “jazz opera,” Jonny spielt auf (Jonny Strikes Up). Whether one would today term the music employed by Krenek “jazz,” the piece was incessantly discussed under the rubric of the “jazz opera” and, for better and worse, few questioned whether this “jazz opera” was at all jazzy. Enjoying around 500 performances across cities stretching from the Baltic to New York, the seemingly unending run of Krenek’s Jonny in 1927 appeared to have ushered in a new era in which jazz’s popularity had reached critical mass. In a word, by November 1927 when Sekles made his announcement, jazz seemed to be conquering the world, both high and low, through its invasion of the concert and opera hall and now something perhaps even more sacrosanct: institutions of higher learning. The combination of jazz, a mass-produced, racially foreign cultural commodity,
with a tradition-rich conservatory such as Dr. Hoch’s left little doubt, for proponents and opponents, that the dividing line between the high culture of operas, symphonies, and conservatories and the low culture of jazz, jazz bands, revues, and cafés was vanishing before their very eyes.

Still, the *Jazzklasse* was never only a debate carried out in the press, a theoretical encounter over ideological abstractions. Instead, its very creation and five-year existence are testament to the concrete ways by which jazz changed the cultural landscape of Weimar Germany. In order to explain why it was in Frankfurt am Main, rather than elsewhere in Germany, France, or Great Britain that the first academic program in jazz was created, it is necessary to consider, after a short history of Dr. Hoch’s Conservatory, the social impact of the hyperinflation that culminated in 1923. Next, through an examination of the writings of Bernhard Sekles, the program’s initiator, both material and aesthetic reasons are presented as to why it was Hoch’s and nowhere else that offered the first formal academic instruction in jazz in Germany. After which, I turn to the discussion sparked by Sekles’ November announcement, with special emphasis on how the *Jazzklasse* occupied a privileged position in the crisis of the high/low ideology during Weimar. Yet, my consideration concludes not with this debate but with discussion of the activities and writings of the *Jazzklasse*’s director, Mátyás Seiber, who, through radio concerts, publications, and pedagogical innovations, practiced what so many others merely preached: the jazzing up of German culture.

A Conservatory in Crisis

In 1923, due to the disastrous effects of almost a decade of inflation, the once well-funded Hoch’s Conservatory was in financial dire straits and saw itself confronted with the increasingly real threat of a state takeover of the institution. Though only four years would pass before Sekles would make his scandalous announcement, there was at the time little to indicate that this esteemed conservatory would begin teaching a low and popular music like jazz. Indeed, the conservatory movement in Germany, which began in the nineteenth century, had been pivotal to defining the boundary between high and low culture. For the creation of conservatories like Dr. Hoch’s can be understood as one important element in the growth of bourgeois culture in Germany in that such institutions occupy a new space within social hierarchies. French economist and cultural theorist Jacques Attali sees the conservatory movement as belonging to a much larger process of what he calls the “normalization of the musi-
cian.” By this, he means to indicate a process by which universal aesthetic forms and practices were imposed on music practices. Attali writes that conservatories “were charged with producing high-quality musicians through very selective training. Beginning in the eighteenth century, they replaced the free training of the jongleurs and minstrels with local apprenticeship.”

Neither courtly nor sacred, conservatories grew out of the perception of a lack of professionalism and training in music with the intent to remove the stain of the dilettante from music and to transform it into a distinct and honored form of art. Conservatories thus mark a disciplining of musicians in both senses of the word. They appropriate the dispersed power of local musicians and create a system under which these institutions possess great power in the conferral of aesthetic legitimacy. Simply put, conservatories served to distinguish between those who belonged to the “higher” realm of the musical artist and those who remained at the “lower” level of untrained or amateur musicians.

As is so often the case, it was a dilettante, lacking cultural capital and thus legitimacy in the eyes of the guardians of culture, who provided the financial capital necessary for the founding of Frankfurt’s first conservatory. Born in 1815, Dr. Joseph Hoch began his life in a relatively wealthy family and is said to have had pretensions to a career in the diplomatic service. He also seems to have fancied himself a musician, taking piano and violin lessons in his youth. Hoch eventually became a lawyer, accumulating a tremendous amount of wealth over his lifetime. When he died in 1874, his will decreed that were he to have no offspring (he did not), “it is my dearest wish that my entire estate serve the purpose of founding and maintaining an institute for music under the name Dr. Hoch’s Conservatory in Frankfurt am Main, the city of my birth.”

His original endowment was a tremendous sum of over 900,000 Goldmarks to be managed by a board of seven trustees. Dr. Hoch’s Conservatory opened on September 19, 1878, four years after his death.

With teachers such as Clara Schumann and students like Hans Pfitzner, Percy Grainger, and Paul Hindemith, Hoch’s Conservatory became a highly reputable and successful institution over the course of its first thirty years. Its enrollment increased from an original number of 139 in 1878 to over 400 in the academic year directly preceding the First World War. The period between 1914 and 1923 was to be a very difficult one for Hoch’s Conservatory, as it was for most such institutions in Germany. For one, it faced diminishing enrollment numbers due to the war, although it did not suffer as terribly as female students had from the beginning outnumbered male students. More importantly, the conservatory had to cope with a steadily rising rate of inflation, which began, at first only slowly, to diminish the size of its endowment.
Yet, it was not merely the economy that was impinging on the desires of the Frankfurters. With the November Revolution of 1918, the Social Democratic Party had come to power, bringing with it a general belief in greater educational opportunity for all citizens and the idea that the state was the best means to achieve this. Under Leo Kestenberg, Social Democrat and head of the music division of the Prussian Ministry of Science, Art, and Education (Volksbildung), a major reform of the music education system was undertaken. A musician by training, Kestenberg felt strongly that music was an essential component of a general humanist education. His overall goal, as he put it in his programmatic Musikziehung und Musikpflege (Music Education and the Cultivation of Music) from 1921, was to help realize music’s potential to create “a new humanity according to the law of community and music.”

During his tenure as head of the music division between 1918 and 1932, he attempted to bring about radical change in the area of music pedagogy. The so-called “Kestenberg Reforms” were in some ways an extension of the professionalization of musicians to which the founding of the conservatories also belonged. Yet this time, it worked against rather than for the conservatories. Kestenberg began by standardizing teacher training, which now required of all instructors an Abitur, as well as the successful completion of a state examination. To this end, Kestenberg envisioned the creation of state committees to design the test and state music colleges to prepare students for it. Of all Kestenberg’s reforms, this last one was most disconcerting to private institutions like Hoch’s Conservatory. In cities like Frankfurt, Kestenberg did not foresee the construction of a new school, opting instead to simply take over the existing institution. Of course, had the hyperinflation not decimated the conservatory’s original endowment, there would have been much less to fear. Yet, because it was now forced to rely on the city of Frankfurt and the state of Prussia for its funding, Hoch’s Conservatory had lost the autonomy from state and market that had defined its early history. Indeed, a state takeover of a previously private conservatory was not without precedence. One had to look no further than the city of Cologne. The Cologne Conservatory, which had stood since 1850, became a public institution in 1925, and Kestenberg was overtly working to achieve the same result in Frankfurt.

It was under these circumstances that Bernhard Sekles became director of Hoch’s Conservatory. In 1923, Sekles was appointed director of Hoch’s Conservatory against the explicit wishes of Kestenberg, who had supported another candidate for the position, Hermann Scherchen. Kestenberg’s resistance to Sekles proved well founded. Under Sekles, Hoch’s Conservatory was revitalized through a period of reform and rebirth that helped to stave off a takeover.
by the state until 1938, long after Sekles had been “relieved” of his position by the Nazis. One such reform was the *Jazzklasse*.

**Bernhard Sekles, the *Jazzklasse*, and the Reform of Dr. Hoch’s Conservatory**

Before looking at the reforms put through during these years, it is necessary to understand Bernhard Sekles, who was to become a central figure in the debate about the *Jazzklasse*. Born in Frankfurt in 1872, the son of a Jewish businessman, Sekles studied under Iwan Knorr at the institution he was later to head. After successfully completing his studies, he acted for a short while as the *Kapellmeister* of the Heidelberg and Mainz Operas. Thereafter, he returned to Frankfurt, where he began teaching at Hoch’s Conservatory in 1896. There, Sekles oversaw courses in music theory, instrumentation, and composition. It was in the latter function that he met an aspiring young Frankfurt musician, Theodor Adorno, who will later play a crucial role in German jazz reception and theory as is discussed further in chapter 7. Equally notable amongst Sekles’ students was Paul Hindemith, who studied under Sekles between 1912 and 1913. Not merely an instructor, Sekles was also a composer in his own right, authoring works such as *Scheherazade* (1917), a three-stage opera after *1001 Nights*, the comedic opera *Die Hochzeit des Faun* (*The Marriage of Faun*) (1921), and *Die zehn Küsse* (*The Ten Kisses*), a light opera from 1926.9 His earliest work revolved around the *Lied* and it was in this general arena that he produced what was to be his most famous work, *Aus dem Schijing* (*From the Shijing*), op. 15 (1907), a cycle of eighteen songs for high voice and piano.10 As can be gleaned from the titles of these works, Sekles drew consistently upon an imaginary East for inspiration, be it Eastern European, Middle Eastern, or Asian. Further, from the few theoretical writings left by Sekles, the image of music that emerges from them is one defined by his concept of nature, which Sekles declares to be the ultimate aim of all music. As he writes in his unpublished *Grundzüge der Formenlehre* (*Fundamentals of the Theory of Form*), “The organism is the highest miracle in nature as well as art.”11

This proclivity for the natural qua exotic other will surface again in the announcement for the *Jazzklasse*. In it, Sekles will use the metaphor of blood transfusion to describe the transfer of jazz from the new to old world. Although it appears he never wrote explicitly about jazz outside of the announcement, Sekles did in fact compose at least one jazz-influenced piece. Contained in the
1927 Das neue Klavierbuch (The New Piano Book), this song, “Kleiner Shimmy” (“Little Shimmy”) is demonstrative of the fact that Sekles was potentially more than casually interested in jazz and jazz music. More important in this context are his comments on what will later become a central issue for defenders of the Jazzklasse: improvisation. In Fundamentals of the Theory of Form, Sekles points out that what differentiates an improvised piece from one composed in advance is precisely the formers’ lack of form. “Improvisation,” he writes, “is a skill of the moment. With it, therefore, the time to form the received is lacking.” In other words, the perfection of form achieved in the works of great composers cannot be achieved in the improvised work. At the same time, this does not mean that improvisation is without musical validity. Sekles argues: “That which it [the improvised piece] lacks and must necessarily lack in final formal boundaries (Formgebundenheit), it replaces in greater or lesser degree through the musical mental readiness (Geistesgegenwart) of the improviser.” The musical justification of improvisation comes from the act of the performance, from the performer’s intellectual and/or spiritual presence, his/her bodily and mental quick wittedness.

This appreciation for improvisation, coupled with Sekles’ Orientalist inclinations, constitute essential components of the conditions of possibility for the Jazzklasse. While by themselves insufficient, they reveal a certain level of receptivity to the idea of teaching jazz at a conservatory. Equally necessary, however, was the fiscal crisis of the post-war years. For without the hyperinflation, it is highly unlikely that the reforms undertaken by Sekles would ever have come about. In response to the Kestenberg reforms and the conservatory’s need to improve its financial situation, Sekles instituted an internal reform of the conservatory’s structure. He resurrected the conservatory’s orchestra, founded an opera school at the conservatory, and, as a countermeasure to the Kestenberg reforms, in 1926/27 offered courses designed to prepare students for the state examinations. As he wrote on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the conservatory’s existence: “An art institute that ignores the legitimate demands of the times ultimately loses its connection with reality and thereby simultaneously its right to exist.”

It is then as part of this broader set of institutional reforms that the decision to offer a program in jazz can best be understood. That such a program would be controversial was without question, though it is hard to believe that Sekles had even the faintest inkling of the scandal his decision would provoke. Be that as it may, Sekles personally authored the announcement, and in November 1927, he sent copies to an unknown number of publications, though the
Does a seriously conducted conservatory have the right to erect a program in jazz?

Not only the right, but even the duty, assuming that the head of this program is not any slick jazz drummer (geschickter Jazz-Schläger), but has studied jazz on-site, i.e. in America. More than this, he must possess a most thorough general education and above all have at his disposal masterful compositional technique as well as possess the pedagogical ability to systematize the material in a progressive manner. Today, more than half of all musicians are forced to regularly or occasionally play in a jazz ensemble, without ever having learned it. Jazz accordingly appears in a distorted image that goes far towards explaining many people’s aversion to it. Of course there are nasty excesses in jazz, and Siegmund von Hausegger is correct, when he publicly protests that included among these is the jazzing of the motifs of our great symphonic masters. He is incorrect, however, to judge an aesthetic branch against its degenerations. Not only for opportunistic reasons, but also for pedagogical ones can a cultivated (gepflegter) jazz be of use to the youth.  

Adorno once described the Sekles’ compositional style as one of “mild exoticism,” a description that goes to the heart of the conceptualization of jazz expressed here. Sekles’ thought straddles the two worlds of the folkish and primitive and technical mastery. This ambivalence, this position between “high” and “low,” structures the announcement as it slides in and out of these worlds. Sekles begins by contesting the belief that jazz and conservatories are inherently opposed and asserts not only that he is justified in his actions, but that he sees the teaching of jazz as an ethical duty. Part of Sekles’ reasoning here remains pragmatic. If, as he says, more than half of all musicians are already playing in jazz ensembles, should they not also be educated in the correct way of playing it? By offering a program in jazz, one could ensure a higher quality of the music that will be played, regardless of whether there is a Jazzklasse or not.

To this practical and pragmatic argument, he couples the idea of taming jazz, of creating a cultivated form of jazz. While he does not clearly delineate this concept, such jazz would most likely have been a version of Whiteman’s
symphonic jazz. As Sekles’ thought remained torn between his desire for the organic, natural, and unaffected and his adoration of form, the announcement for the Jazzklasse balances these two sides of his musical personality by incorporating the exotic in a highly technical manner. Further evidence of this ambivalence is demonstrated by his discussion of the ideal program head. Sekles derides the “slick jazz drummer” and says instead that the person must not only be a classically trained musician, but also have experienced jazz firsthand in America. As we will see, the man who eventually headed the Jazzklasse, Mátyás Seiber, could claim to fill both these requirements. Acquiring such a person, Sekles hoped, would dispel the idea of jazz as a chaotic, revolutionary music that must necessarily signal the end of dominance for European and German music within the conservatory.

It is easy to see Sekles as a hero of jazz fighting against the reactionaries who rejected his plan. However, any such romanticization of the progressive and sympathetic Sekles falters under the weight of his own language. In the second half of the announcement, he writes:

In the creations of our day an increasingly abstract-speculative moment is coming to light. Here, only a transfusion of unspent nigger blood, if mediated by a tactful musician, can be of aid. For music without any impulsiveness (Triebhaftigkeit) does not deserve the name music any more. If jazz is a good pedagogical means for the producer, then it is to no less a degree for the reproducer. Though difficult to explain, it is a fact that the German, who after all has achieved the highest in music, demonstrates conspicuously little joy in the rhythmic, despite the fact that it is generally recognized that rhythm is to be seen as the pulse of all music. One can, however, view the sense of rhythm as a special discipline—in other words, removed from all the other musical elements—in that it can be taught only inadequately. No one knows this better than the head of a conservatory who can continually observe how students perform the most neck-breaking rhythmic arts in gymnastics without, however, it ever having the least use value for their musical practices. Jazz, on the other hand, is so totally constituted by the rhythmic that, under a superior and systematically led practice, it can develop the rhythmic feeling in an incomparably surer way. Dr. Hoch’s Conservatory wants therefore to be the first to attempt, with sufficient enrollment, to form a program in jazz. The instruction will apply not only to the typical jazz instruments, as they are: drums, saxophone, banjo, trumpet, and trombone, but also to practicing ensemble
performance. Eventually there should also be a corresponding vocal program connected. Instruction begins in the middle of January 1928. Brochures can be requested from the offices of Dr. Hoch’s Conservatory.20

Like many before him, Sekles saw contemporary music as hyper-rationalized and overly abstract, perhaps even overly civilized. Implied here is that the Neue Musik (New Music) of Schoenberg, as well as the Neue Sachlichkeit of his former student Hindemith, has led German music down the false path of abstraction. Against this, jazz could function as a transfusion of cultural vitality, promising to bring with it a spontaneity, even carnality, absent to him in contemporary German art music. Not just the stylized version as he felt his own compositions to be, in jazz he felt he had found an “unspent,” untainted, pure source of vitality. For Sekles, then, jazz was to become part of the academy, not as an equal of European music but as raw material to be turned into a finished product. Despite its revolutionary call for the inclusion of jazz at the conservatory, in many ways, Sekles’ announcement remains true to the ideal of the conservatory: to create a distinction between artist and amateur, between high and low.

The Jazzklasse Debate

Nonetheless, jazz’s opponents immediately saw in the announcement a direct attack on German culture and music and seized upon Sekles’ wording and the transfusion metaphor in particular.21 Already by late November, a chorus of disapproval issued forth from the conservative press. Sekles’ call for a “transfusion of unspent nigger blood” was explicitly quoted and referred to ad nauseam, supplemented by a hefty bantering about of racial epithets against Africans, African Americans, white Americans, and Jews. Deriding the Jazzklasse as another example of Germany suffering under a “Black Horror,” cultural reactionaries rejected Sekles’ claims about the faltering rhythm of German music, and it was this debate that caught the attention of the broader public, including the Prussian state parliament and the New York Times referred to at the outset.22

Alongside such ad hominem and ill-informed rants, there proceeded another, equally revealing debate. This concerned the question of whether Unterhaltungsmusik, or music for entertainment, belonged at all in the halls of conservatories, private or otherwise. Sekles’ announcement raised a number of
important questions relating to jazz and its status vis-à-vis European art music. For example: Is it necessary to teach jazz music to “serious” musicians? Further, is all entertainment music to be banned from the conservatories? Finally, what is, in fact, jazz? Is it African or American, a Volksmusik, art music, or merely a commodity?

One of the first to react to Sekles’ circular was the conservative Allgemeine Musikzeitung, which published a piece by Paul Schwers entitled “Jazz als akademisches Lehrfach!” (“Jazz as Academic Subject!”). Schwers vehemently rejects Sekles’ arguments and demands that the latter “justify” himself: “How will you justify yourself now? You will have to do so, if your name is not to suffer permanent damage.” The personalization achieved by Schwers was generative of a split within the debate. On the one hand, there existed personal, often anti-Semitic, attacks on Sekles, while on the other, a discussion of jazz’s contribution and relation to European music took form. In the attacks of Schwers and many others, one again sees the linkage of Blackness, jazz, and Jewishness encountered in Renker’s novel Symphonie und Jazz. It is, moreover, an element of German jazz reception that will reach fever pitch in the reaction to the operetta Schatten über Harlem by Russian-Jewish dramatist Ossip Dyrmow to be analyzed in the following chapter. Following a strategy of bonding Jewishness to Blackness (and vice versa) as a means of rejecting popular culture, Schwers denies jazz any aesthetic value. Employing the same organic language Sekles had used in the announcement, Schwers demonizes jazz as a plague and chides him for wanting to help bring the “filth of the every day” into the conservatory. Referring to the many German musicians who play jazz, he writes:

It is hunger which drives by far the most to choke down this repulsive nigger food [. . . ] These young people will tell you that even a “cultivated jazz” cannot be the object of academic instruction. For every musician, as far as he is prepared for public ensemble performance can without difficulty master the essentially stereotypical rhythmic structure of jazz music, which incidentally is not and can never be music in the pure sense. In the best case it is a music substitute: rough and in the long run an abhorrent, superficial surrogate (widerlich anmutendes Surrogat).

The racialized descriptions of the economic situation will repeatedly be called upon to reject the Jazzklasse. To Schwers, jazz is merely another example of how high culture is no longer able to remain “above” the everyday, profane,
and racially other world of popular music. Schwers’ description of jazz as an impure surrogate can be read as an attempt to redraw the boundary between high and low and, at least partially, to do so along racial lines.\textsuperscript{29}

Schwers’ attack on Sekles and jazz did not go unnoticed, and counterattacks came from both the practical and theoretical side. For the professional musicians who read \textit{Der Artist}, jazz was much more than an ideological bogeyman; it was an artful means to earn a living. It is hardly surprising then that Schwers’ words hardly struck a chord there and were severely criticized by Leon Lencov. Reprinting Schwers’ comments for his readers, Lencov writes: “The presumption is hard to resist that while Paul Schwers is unquestionably well versed in many musical matters, he has occupied himself with jazz only in a most superficial manner.”\textsuperscript{30} Further, from the \textit{Frankfurter Zeitung} came another positive response. In his discussion from November 25, 1927, music critic Karl Holl highlights three positive aspects to the idea of the \textit{Jazzklasse}.\textsuperscript{31} First, he maintains that the \textit{Jazzklasse} could be valuable not only in “raising the general standard of the culturally much too little attended to entertainment music, but also in the strengthening of the German musician’s relatively underdeveloped rhythmic sense.”\textsuperscript{32} Like Sekles, Holl sees jazz as a means to invigorate German music. Against nationalist conservatives like Schwers, he ironically adds that it is only through the adoption of an “unspent foreign substance” that degeneration through musical incest is to be averted.\textsuperscript{33} Lastly, Holl valorizes the effort to bring folk and serious music together. He argues that anyone who fully grasps the contemporary situation in music,

\begin{quote}
will still have correctly understood the great severity of the problem of folk art and high art, entertainment music and intellectual music, when, as in the present case, the attempt at a bridging of that opposition, lamented again and again as a “tear” in our cultural situation, is introduced with inadequate propagandistic means.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

Though without embracing what he sees as Sekles’ unfortunate choice of vocabulary, Holl does view the \textit{Jazzklasse} as an opportunity to revisit the oppositions within music between high and low culture. It is an attempt to repair the torn halves of art, to bridge, in other words, high with popular culture.

Yet this recognition is coupled with the disdain Holl exhibits for Sekles’ conceptualization of jazz as art in the strong sense of the word. In this, the liberal Holl and the conservative Schwers are united. “Jazz,” he writes, “is truly not to be placed on the same level as our received forms of art music. It is, if we wish to use the concept responsibly, as it has been handed down by our
great cultural tradition, not musical art at all, but . . . ‘musical arts and crafts.’” Holl reproaches Sekles for overestimating the aesthetic value of jazz, seeing “dangerous irony” (gefährliche künstlerisch-ethische Spitze) in Sekles’ concept of cultivated jazz. Unlike Holl, Sekles appeared to judge all works of art by the same fundamental premise; that they should strive to reproduce the ineffable formal beauty of the natural. Sekles cared little from where it originated, whereas Holl, although positively reacting to jazz’s use as a bridge between entertainment and serious music, wished to retain a conceptual distinction between art and the economy.

Each author can be seen as representative of a different bridging strategy available to Weimar-era commentators. In the case of Sekles, one encounters a strategy of “Romantic reaction,” while in Holl, one sees an attempt at what I wish to call “bourgeois reconciliation.” Sekles represents a strategy of Romantic reaction in that his organic concept of art and culture signify a desire to overcome the division between high and low through recourse to an idyllic, even atavistic, precapitalist unity of art and nature. This form of bridging seeks to unite high and low through a circumvention of their division in capitalism. Romantic reaction calls for a return to a form of art that is capable of unifying the two realms. To be sure, Sekles had been forced to recognize their ultimate unity largely as a result of the incursion of the economy into the academy, something that explains much of the tension between his practical and aesthetic grounding in the Jazzklasse announcement. Ultimately, however, his conception of art elides these economic aspects in favor of the notion of art as natural organism.

Holl’s mode of argumentation, conversely, is indicative of a strategy of bourgeois reconciliation in that while he desires a unification of the two realms, he envisions this process as taking place under the hegemony of high culture, much like the authors of the symphonic jazz novels previously encountered. While he appears to argue for an equalization of the relationship, for Holl, the Jazzklasse also signifies a moment for high culture to reassert its dominance over popular culture. Central here is his idea that low culture and non-European cultures in general have little to add to high culture. At best, they can allow Europeans to regain lost or forgotten aspects of their past. In the Jazzklasse debate, the primary example of such remembering was the lost ability to improvise that was now to be regained through jazz.

In response to the debate generated by his announcement, Sekles issued a second declaration to clarify his original position. This second circular avoids any reference to the blood transfusion metaphor and instead concentrates on the gains to be made from the inclusion of jazz in formal music education.
First, Sekles repeats his argument that regardless of one’s personal opinion, one cannot ignore the fact that a high percentage of contemporary musicians is forced to play in a jazz ensemble without being either stylistically or technically prepared. Second, he raises for the first time the issue of improvisation, which will later become a centerpiece of the defense of the Jazzklasse. Expanding on his original statement that jazz could serve to bring rhythmic joy back into German music, he now states that instruction in jazz could be used as a means to relearn the lost art of improvisation. “For the reproducer it [jazz] represents the most vital means of rhythmic education known to me. Furthermore, it revives the capacity to improvise which has almost become lost to us.” The ability to improvise is recast in this second statement as a primary quality of jazz, which, to the European, is something not foreign, but forgotten. Mixing his own Romanticism with the bourgeois sensibility of Holl and others, Sekles’ turn towards improvisation in this second statement marks an important shift within the debate.

While Sekles and the Jazzklasse continued to be critiqued from the conservative camp, his argument that jazz ought to be conceived of as a means to revitalize German and European music found support with the progressive music critic Heinrich Strobel. In “Unzeitgemäße Proteste” (“Untimely Protests”) from the modernist periodical Musikblätter des Anbruch, Strobel maintains that jazz is valuable insofar as it not only has engendered a return of rhythm to German music but also a return of improvisation. Citing Hindemith, Stravinsky, and Weill as examples of high art that would be unthinkable without jazz, Strobel praises the incorporation of jazz into art music. Of improvisation specifically, he notes:

The art of improvisation which was jettisoned in the 19th century is re-born in jazz. We have known for a long time that it is not so much about the piece itself, but about what the jazz band makes of it. The jazz band demands creative activity from the individual. It awakens the joy in elemental music making. It is a sign of accountability vis-à-vis our time when a leading conservatory takes up these problems of today.
sense, one might say that for Strobel, what the civilized European has forgotten, the barbarians of jazz will allow them to master once again.

In the attention paid to the European elements of jazz, one sees evidence of an attempt on the part of these liberal defenders to come to terms with the transformation of music and art under capitalism. By arguing that one could return via jazz to a musical quality believed to have been lost to progress, supporters were able to point towards an alternative vision of modernity, one not completely determined by the market or racial others. Developing this idea most fully was Leipzig music critic Alfred Baresel, a figure previously encountered in the discussion of Paul Whiteman. A prolific writer, Baresel wrote numerous articles on jazz and entertainment music and authored the first German-language study of jazz music in 1925, *Das Jazzbuch* (*The Jazz Book*). Through his *Jazz Book*, as well as numerous other essays, in many ways Baresel became Weimar Germany’s authority on jazz music. Given his stature, it is not surprising that on two separate occasions he commented on the scandal in Frankfurt, first in the *Neue Musik-Zeitung* and then in *Melos*.

Predictably, Baresel entered the debate as a defender of the *Jazzklasse* and attempted to dispel certain myths about jazz propagated by the program’s antagonists. He begins his article from the *Neue Musik-Zeitung* by suggesting that only through music education can the split between high and low be bridged. To him:

> The baleful division of our present music in edifying and entertaining can only be bridged through pedagogy . . . . This division is especially noticeable today in Germany, where the extremes are marked by the small intellectual circle around Schoenberg and the large art-averse masses, on whom musical influence is possible only at places of entertainment.43

For Baresel, contemporary music has split into, on the one hand, an intellectualized form characterized by Schoenberg, and, on the other, the Schlager-consuming masses. In this situation, he argues that it would be best to raise the level of music at such establishments to that of high art. At the same time, he makes clear that, for him, entertainment music has certain advantages over art music, especially in the area of rhythm. Equally important in this regard is the economic side of the argument, namely, because German musicians are not entirely competent in the field of entertainment music qua jazz, they have suffered financially. “For years,” he writes, “German musicians have been waging a difficult battle against the preference for their foreign colleagues, who because of more thorough, specialized training (*Durchbil-
dung) are mostly superior.” In other words, a program in jazz such as the one planned by Sekles could enable them to compete more ably against their non-German competition.

This defense of the Jazzklasse, oriented as it was towards the practical advantages to be gained through education in jazz, was supplemented by a second, more ideologically charged article in the journal Melos. In this second article, “Kunst-Jazz” (“Art Jazz”), Baresel focuses specifically on the relationship between jazz and art music, seeking to determine the extent to which jazz has already been absorbed by European art music. To a certain extent presaging Sacher-Woenckhaus’ later argument, Baresel begins by commenting:

I do not see anything more or less in the dust raising decrees of the Frankfurt jazz conservatory than the first, extremely necessary attempt to put control back into the hands of responsible music authorities over this, in the final instance inherently foreign, but no longer removable entertainment art.

The watchword here is control. For him, pure American jazz is less an expression of musical development than a reflection of a society in transformation. It is mass music for the masses. Referring twice to jazz’s “sporty” quality, Baresel maintains that it has been left up to Europeans to make jazz into “actual” music. Already before the war, he argues, Debussy’s ragtime pieces displayed the impact of African American music on Europe. Baresel thus repositions later pieces like Stravinsky’s ragtime works, not as belonging to a post-war invasion from America but as an extension of an already existent trend in European, especially French, art music. Of this, he writes:

Jazz, as it came to us from America, was . . . in many ways already permeated by elements of the new art music, namely of the French kind. Even its most characteristic instrument, the saxophone, is of French invention. [ . . . ] The motoric element attributed to jazz, the stomping rhythm amongst the syncopation is found just as well in Stravinsky and Bartok’s gravitation towards indigenous folk music (Hinstreben zur heimatlichen Folklore).

The emphasis here on the European elements of jazz can in part be read as overcompensating for the depiction of jazz as foreign and barbaric, as “international” and “anti-German.” Yet, it is equally evident of an attempt by Baresel and others to reassert European mastery against jazz.
In raising jazz from mere entertainment to European art form, there is not only a desire to avoid the fate of atonality and its unpopularity with the populace at large but to circumvent the colonization of European music by racial others. As he wrote in the passage cited at the beginning of this chapter: “Entertainment music should not be fought, it should be raised. Its eradication would be utopia.” The potential utopia Baresel glimpses in jazz’s eradication is one in which the deleterious effects of capitalist production on European music are negated through a reinvigoration of the European high cultural tradition. Such a turn was only possible, however, through the strategic reconfiguration of improvisation as European. Through the idea of improvisation, jazz enabled liberal critics like Holl, Strobel, and Baresel to postulate the rebirth of a European past once thought destroyed but that could now be regained through the modern entertainment music known as jazz.

Interrupted Crossing: The Jazzklasse between Theory and Praxis

Despite the vehement protest, Sekles carried on with his plans and the Jazzklasse opened in early 1928. Enrollment in the program hovered around 15, and, through the activities of its director Mátyás Seiber, made substantial contributions to the local Frankfurt music scene. Still, after but a five-year existence, it was forcibly closed in April 1933, and its Jewish faculty members notified of their impending dismissal. As with other short-lived examples of Weimar jazz culture, it is crucial that we recognize the Jazzklasse as much for its five years of existence as for the debate recounted above and its inevitable closure. As such, I would like to conclude with a consideration of the jazz practices of the program and its director.

Mátyás Seiber’s biography is fascinating, yet in many ways also typical of this period’s jazz innovators. Hungarian by birth, his particular path led first to Budapest and Zoltán Kodály, where he studied Hungarian folk songs. After completing his studies, but before landing at Hoch’s Conservatory, Seiber took a temporary position as a musician on a transatlantic ship’s orchestra and worked for a few months in late 1927 on a ship of the famous Hamburg-America line. Though it is highly unlikely that Seiber procured an education in jazz on these short travels between Hamburg and New York, they are nonetheless important reminders of the flow of peoples, cultures, and ideas across the Atlantic in the period. More interesting in terms of Seiber’s engagement with popular music were his associations with the Südwestdeutscher Rundfunk (Southwest German Radio Station), or SWR, based
in Frankfurt. Beginning in 1925, SWR had its own jazz band, which was led by Paul Hindemith’s brother, Rudolf. At its peak in 1927, SWR’s jazz band played weekly on German radio, though in years afterward the regularity of its performances dropped off noticeably. The radio also supported professional, non-academic music from the Amar Quartett, which premiered a “Jazz Dance Concert” in September 1926. Even before taking over the Jazzklasse, Seiber participated in two small ensemble formations, the Caféhaus Trio and the Lenzewski-Quartett, the former headed by Erich Itor Kahn and the latter by Gustav Lenzewski, many of whose members were also part of SWR’s house band. Thus, by the time Seiber took over the Jazzklasse at the beginning of 1928, he not only had a claim of having years of practical experience but could demonstrate thorough knowledge of European classical and folk music. Each of these traits came into play over the course of the next five years; these years witnessed the Jazzklasse presenting its and Seiber’s work to the public through performances by his students, which in a few instances were broadcast on the radio.

Yet even before then, Seiber entered the ongoing debate on the program in a 1928 article “Jazz als Erziehungsmittel” (“Jazz as Educational Method”) published in Melos. Deftly extricating himself from the dominant terms of the debate, Seiber is the first to ask whether instruction in jazz is at all possible. As other defenders, he points to the great number of musicians who are already playing and for whom jazz instruction certainly would do no harm. But this argument remains too abstract, especially for someone who must develop a program of academic training in what had up to this point been an informal, commercial practice in Europe. The difficulties of systematizing the study of jazz into different courses and instructional principles are potentially in his mind when he writes that, in addition to the provocative question of whether one should teach jazz, one must add: “whether one can instruct jazz (and how one can do this).”

Seiber next discusses the rhythmic particularities of jazz and from there moves onto the art of improvisation. For both these aspects, Seiber argues on the basis of cultural, rather than racial, difference. He sees rhythmic syncopation in jazz as, for the most part, determined by the creation of Scheintakte, or “pseudo-measures,” a concept later taken over by Adorno. As Seiber wrote in his Schule für Jazz-Schlagzeug (Manual for Jazz Percussion):

One group among the shifts of accent is of particular importance, one which stands out for its regularity. For example, if in a row of 4/4 measures one continuously emphasizes every third quarter-note, in this way
an impression of many 3/4 measures is produced. Thus are created a form of “pseudo-measures” against the original measures. These are of extraordinary importance for jazz.\(^57\)

Seiber later served as jazz expert to Adorno for his essay “Über Jazz” (“On Jazz”) from 1936, and Adorno will make much of the false, apparent, or pseudo-character of these measures. Yet for Seiber, the term “pseudo-measure” is less an ideological critique of jazz’s originality than an attempt to frame jazz rhythm for a German audience unfamiliar with it. In other words, this concept makes jazz rhythm understandable through its translation into preexisting European musical vocabulary. In this regard, it is also important to note that Seiber places quotation marks around this term. It is as if he were aware of the terminology’s insufficiency, yet unable to proceed without it. In “Jazz as Educational Method” and his jazz manual, Seiber consistently emphasizes the incompleteness of the study of notes and repetition of rhythms. For him, these are necessary, but not sufficient, to jazz performance.

Seiber further develops this position in his comments on improvisation. Though to a certain extent Seiber also relies on the idea of jazz as a reawakening of improvisation, his execution of the argument is unique. Seiber’s essential point about improvisation, and one that reinforces his faith in the idea that jazz can be taught and is not an “inborn” ability, is that improvisation, too, can be instructed. The problems with improvisation that seem to plague Germans and not Americans (he does not specify white or Black) have to do with the context of musical instruction in Europe. As he writes:

Certainly the Americans do it [improvise] entirely “unconsciously,” i.e. similar to the way the Gypsy in Hungary decorates the melody, plays around “by ear,” adds “countermelodies,” etc. But we must consider that the American grows up in the middle, so to speak, of this music. He hears it resounding from every street corner, before every store, every house, through speakers, gramophones or in the orchestra itself. This music plays in America the role of a sort of “folk music” and “popular music,” it has its own tradition and through the repeated acts of hearing “sits” in the strictest sense of the word in every American’s “blood.”\(^58\)

It is important to read Seiber’s use of the “blood metaphor” in relation to its use in the Jazzklasse debate by Sekles, Schwers, Holl, and others. Though seeming to rely on an assumption of naïveté within non-European cultures, it is also evident that Seiber wishes to signal the fundamentally questionable nature of
such concepts through his repeated use of scare quotes. As with the term “pseudo-measure,” Seiber’s text carefully navigates, albeit without transcending, the given framework of the debate.

Another powerful example of such ambiguity is contained in Seiber’s references to the use of improvisation in the European past. This section of his argument comes after his cultural definition of improvisation. He begins by looking to European handbooks on improvisation from the sixteenth century. These he sees as analogous to the current use of such handbooks within jazz instruction in Germany, for example his own Manual for Jazz Percussion published a year later. Seiber is acutely aware that learning improvisation through a handbook would seem to be a contradiction in terms. Yet what critics of German jazz practices in the 1920s often miss, and conversely what Seiber recognizes here, is that, given the dependence on the written note in European musical life, it was perhaps unavoidable that the path to freeing oneself from notes had first to begin with them. As Seiber himself puts it, these handbooks and their formulas for improvisations and breaks are “naturally only a teaching aid for beginning . . . , both today and in the past; the ultimate goal towards which one strives was and is . . . to gain such practice in the matter that the book is no longer necessary and one is capable of playing in an impromptu manner.”

This piece is perhaps the most optimistic of Seiber’s. Written at the beginning of his career in jazz instruction, at a time before the economic slump and the rise of the Nazis, it displays a rare openness to jazz and the music’s aesthetic potential.

Seiber, like so many others, shifted his position on jazz during the final few years of the republic, and scholarship on Seiber’s jazz writings has sometimes focused its attention on later, more skeptical moments in his work. Yet here, one must be attentive to the fact that the general tenor of writing on jazz during the late 1920s and early 1930s would take a critical turn, with many voices declaring the jazz revolution of the early and mid-1920s to be at an end. For example, composer Alban Berg, who would incorporate elements of ragtime into his work, most notably the later Lulu opera, responded to Sekles’ plans that while he found the idea laudable, he feared jazz’s time was already past. Or as Seiber himself wrote in 1930, “Jazz has its stormy youth behind it. It stands now in the mature ‘prime of its life.’ We ought not expect many surprises from it.” Seiber’s position here can not only be compared with that of Berg, but also with that of Kurt Weill, who in 1928 proclaimed that “today we are doubtlessly standing at the end of the epoch during which one could speak of the influence of jazz on art music.” Yet Weill closes his essay with a demand that jazz practices, in particular of collective music making, be used to
break apart the “rigid system of musical practice in our concerts and theaters.”

Like Weill, Seiber’s “negative” comments regarding jazz belie his continuing faith in jazz’s potential for development. Yet while Weill’s thoughts remained at the level of abstraction, Seiber developed a theoretical and practical basis for achieving such a jazz breakthrough.

In his 1931 article, “Jazz und die musikstudierende Jugend” (“Jazz and Youth Music Learners”), Seiber follows up on his earlier claim of jazz having left its wild childhood behind, claiming that the music has entered a “quieter, more measured, and more orderly phase of life.” Indeed, he at first seems to abide by a developing undercurrent of German jazz criticism during the early 1930s that jazz’s Blackness is a “fable” rather than fact, yet another element of Seiber’s writings later propagated by Adorno. If Seiber here diminishes the Black contribution to jazz, he is equally concerned with debunking the essentialized ideology of Black jazz that embraced groups like The Revelers and Singing Sophomores as “Negro Quartettes,” only later to learn they were just “conventional (bieder) whites.” As in his other writings, Seiber is as much concerned here with the proper production of jazz as he is with its conditions of possibility. For him, America’s vanguard position in jazz music has nothing to do with race but with the American “milieu,” put another way, the social context. “Playing jazz well is not . . . a question of race, but one of familiarization. The German musical youth can—or rather could—play jazz just as well as the American, if the conditions were the same as in America.” While he understands that conditions in the two societies and cultures will never be identical (nor does he feel they should be), there are specific measures that can be taken to raise the level of German jazz. This begins for him with the creation of a jazz milieu, a “‘jazz culture’” in Germany. He suggests that this is already happening to an extent in bars and other entertainment establishments across Germany where jazz has become part of the lived environment. But, argues Seiber, it is also necessary to promote its creation through training like that offered by the Jazzklasse, because, as he rightly claims, the public will only take jazz seriously when German musicians take it seriously.

One of the primary means through which Seiber and the Jazzklasse aspired to take jazz seriously and thereby change the public perception of the music was through radio broadcasts. The Jazzklasse presented itself for the first time in a radio concert on March 3, 1929. The program featured various Tin Pan Alley tunes like “Igloo Stomp,” “Miss Annabelle Lee,” and “Virginia Stomp.” It also featured Stravinsky’s “Suite Nr. 2.” Amongst the performers for that first concert was the German-Jewish musician Eugen Henkel, playing banjo and guitar. Henkel later became a significant figure in popular music and
jazz during the Third Reich. After praising Henkel’s performance in particular, the reviewer from Frankfurt’s General-Anzeiger concluded: “It was a nice success . . . for the new jazz program and for all future Paul Whitemans, Jack Hyltons, and Bernhard Ettés. Maybe you’ll even make it to ‘Jazz Doctors.’”

A “symphonic jazz concert” then took place on February 20, 1930, featuring Gershwin’s Rhapsody in Blue, selections from Weill’s Dreigroschenoper, and Jazzolette, an original composition by Seiber. This same concert was then offered as a matinee performance on March 11, and nationally broadcast on the Berliner Funkstunde. Yet another appearance of the Frankfurt Jazzklasse occurred in November 1931. Additionally, Seiber and in all likelihood the students of the Jazzklasse were part of the performance of the German-version of Vivian Ellis and Richard Myer’s operetta Mr. Cinders (German title: Jim und Jill) when it debuted in Frankfurt in December 1931, and also took part in numerous performances of Brecht and Weill’s Threepenny Opera in Frankfurt’s Neues Theater in October 1928.

If these concerts and Seiber’s own compositions from the period indicate that his approach to jazz was heavily indebted to Whiteman’s symphonic jazz rather than African American jazz musicians, they equally reveal a high degree of public engagement on the part of Seiber. Through these concerts, locally and nationally broadcast as some were, the Jazzklasse remained in the public eye long after the fury of the initial debate had subsided. In what was for him an extremely positive review, Adorno wrote of the first concert: “The Jazzklasse of Hoch’s Conservatory, which brought its initiator, Sekles, so many stupid (töricht) attacks, introduced itself to the public under the extraordinary and knowledgeable leadership of Mátyás Seiber and legitimated itself splendidly.” The concert also provided the opportunity for Adorno to comment on the already cold Jazzklasse debate. Against the attackers of Sekles and Seiber, Adorno maintains that jazz is an unavoidable fact of contemporary music culture and that without question jazz will have a positive effect on the reproductive capacities of German musicians. At the same time, he relativizes jazz’s importance and hints that with the Jazzklasse, i.e., with jazz as a pedagogical subject, the music no longer seems as modern as it once did.

Yet, the ultimate significance of the Jazzklasse may not lie with such radio concerts or reviews but with the program’s students themselves. Along with their teachers, the students who came through the Jazzklasse’s doors were daily dedicating themselves to jazz. As such, I would like to conclude with a moment of unique insight into Seiber’s pedagogical method, which comes in the form of a November 1932 article on the Jazzklasse from the Frankfurter Zeitung. Written on the eve of Germany’s descent into National Socialism, the
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tone of this piece betrays little of the high stakes associated with the earlier debate. Quickly rehashing the now-forgotten scandal, the text reveals what a typical hour of instruction at the Jazzklasse looked like. It describes how Seiber stood before the class, directing its members with various commands: to repeat a particular passage, go over a section without the melodic line, repeat it again, but this time now only with the horn section, etc. Seiber emerges in the piece as a demanding and serious instructor, someone who expects as much of his jazz students as he would of classical musicians. Tellingly, it suggests how serious the issue of jazz remained for him.

Perhaps most interesting, though, is the reference to the “real” instructor of the class: the gramophone. Seiber’s instructional method was to have his “syncopators,” as the article calls the program’s students, repeatedly and intensively practice with each other as described above. Yet, the moment of truth was not faithfulness to a text or to Seiber’s ideas alone. For afterwards, the group sat in a circle around a record player, listening to a jazz record, comparing it with that which they were playing and answering technical questions from Seiber about the piece as performed on the recording. The article does not reveal which jazz album the students were practicing to, and it is unlikely to have been a name like Duke Ellington, Fletcher Henderson, or Louis Armstrong. But, to paraphrase Seiber’s comments about the jazz culture he was aspiring to create with his class, it might have or, more precisely, could have been had the experiment of the Jazzklasse not been cut short, forcing this emerging jazz culture into hiding and exile.

Still, Sekles’ and Seiber’s Jazzklasses had a long-lasting effect on Frankfurt, Germany, and, indeed, European jazz history. Part of this jazz culture in hiding was Frankfurt’s Hotclub Combo, a formation that included two students from the now jazz-less Hoch’s Conservatory, Carlo Bohländer and Emil Mangelsdorff (brother of the world famous jazz trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff). More to the point, one of the Jazzklasse’s actual students, Dietrich Schulz-Köhn, became a pivotal figure of the German jazz scene, both during and after the Third Reich. Though he never officially became a “jazz doctor” as the reviewer of the first concert by the Jazzklasse had suggested might occur, he did choose “Dr. Jazz” as his moniker and purchased letterhead to reflect this. I reference him here because during the 1950s, Schulz-Köhn was also a player in yet another rediscovery of Weimar culture in the Federal Republic. While visiting the United States in late 1957, he acquired the address of the African American poet Langston Hughes. Though he wasn’t able to personally visit Hughes at that time, he began corresponding with him after returning to Germany. It was as “Dr. Jazz” then that Schulz-Köhn sent Hughes clippings.
from German articles in which the poet’s name had been mentioned. In one letter, Schulz-Köhn tells Hughes that he and his wife have been working to make Hughes’ poetry known in Germany. Though Hughes doesn’t mention it in his response, he was certainly aware of the German interest in his work. Indeed, he had been corresponding with German-speaking fans like Schulz-Köhn since the 1920s when his jazz and blues poems, and with them the African American modernist movement known as the “Harlem Renaissance,” first became known to a German-speaking audience.