

Cambridge University Library

Hans Keller Archive

An introduction and summary

By

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Hans Keller: a portrait by Milein Cosman.

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Hans Keller (1919 – 1985)

'All his life he has done everything he wanted to do, paid or not, with total involvement – and has done nothing else' [Keller to Ernest Warburton, 1 May 1979].

“Hans Keller was one of the most celebrated musical figures of his time. As a teacher, broadcaster, analyst, coach, polemicist and critic (he would have preferred ‘anti-critic’), he was a passionate and brilliantly articulate advocate of everything he deemed best in music, and an equally outspoken scourge of poor standards in verbal and musical communication as well as in ethical behaviour. His combative presence had a remarkable effect on admirers and detractors alike: he was often sought out for his views, sometimes reviled for expressing them forthrightly, but rarely ignored because of them. His idiosyncratic blend of enthusiasms, especially football and psychoanalysis, ensured that satiric magazines never let him out of their sight; and his exceptional companionability enabled him to gather round him some of the most gifted musicians of his time. Indeed, to those who knew him well he became the unofficial guardian of their conscience.” *Hans Keller: essays on music*. Edited by Christopher Wintle, with Bayan Northcott and Irene Samuel. Cambridge University Press, 1994. p.xiii. Introduction.

Musician, writer, teacher and broadcaster Hans Keller was born in Vienna in 1919, growing up in a richly cultural and intellectual environment where music-making was the norm and in which, as a violinist of some considerable talent, he took an active part. It was during this time that he learned much of the string quartet repertoire and from this time that his intense love of the quartets of Haydn, Beethoven and Mozart stemmed, which would both infuse his approach to musical understanding and inspire much of his most eloquent writing. Life changed abruptly in 1938, when Keller, along with many others, was arrested and interrogated by the Nazis. On his release, he escaped to England with the help of his brother-in-law Roy Franey, arriving at Croydon airport in December 1938.

Following the outbreak of World War II, Keller was interned in the summer of 1940 first at Huyton Camp in Liverpool and then at Mooragh on the Isle of Man, where he was held until the spring of 1941. In a letter of January 1941 from Mooragh to his mother (who had left Vienna for London before the Anschluss) telling her of his likely release, he was, astonishingly, able to reflect: *“Never again will I have the opportunity to gather so much insight into human nature as I have here, and in this respect internment was useful”*.

This observation marks his increasing interest in psychology and psychoanalysis, which alongside making a living as a freelance player and writer in the immediate post-War years, he was to develop into a central tenet of his thinking as a critic. His collaboration with the sociologist Margaret Phillips on the psychology of small social groups formed an important part of his work in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

However, it was music, not psychology (although the latter would influence his approach to musical understanding), which was the driving force of his life and the decade following the War saw him develop the range of his writing in this field. A large body of work on film music ensued, together with reviews of concerts, festivals, books, recordings and articles - in particular on the music of Mozart, Benjamin Britten and Schoenberg. In 1949, deeply concerned with what he perceived as a lack of standards and of integrity in music criticism, he joined his friend the musicologist Donald

Mitchell as co-editor of *Music Survey*, a journal designed to rattle the cage of the established musical world.

But it was in 1957, that the innovation for which he is remembered best came into being: his wordless Functional Analysis (or 'FA' as it is universally known). This was intended to demonstrate, purely through music, the underlying unity of the contrasting themes and movements of any given composition, thus enabling both performers and the listener to better understand and appreciate the work as a whole. Fifteen FAs were composed, largely of string quartets by Haydn, Beethoven and Mozart but also of Britten's Second String Quartet and Bach's Brandenburg concerto no.3. The BBC broadcast five, and he received commissions for others from Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR), Radio Bremen, Dartington Summer School and from Benjamin Britten for the Aldeburgh Festival.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a piece titled "VII. Analytic epilogue." The score is written on two pages of manuscript paper. The left page is headed "Tempo di allegro" and "Tempo di allegro" (circled in red). It features a multi-staff arrangement with various dynamics and markings such as "p con sordano", "p", "p con sordano", and "p con sordano". A vertical label "NOTES OFF" is written on the right side of the left page. The right page is headed "Tempo di primo movimento" and "Tempo di primo movimento" (circled in red). It also features a multi-staff arrangement with dynamics like "p" and "p+", and markings such as "rileva" and "a tempo". The score concludes with the word "End" written in the final measure. The handwriting is in black ink, and there are some red markings and annotations throughout the score.

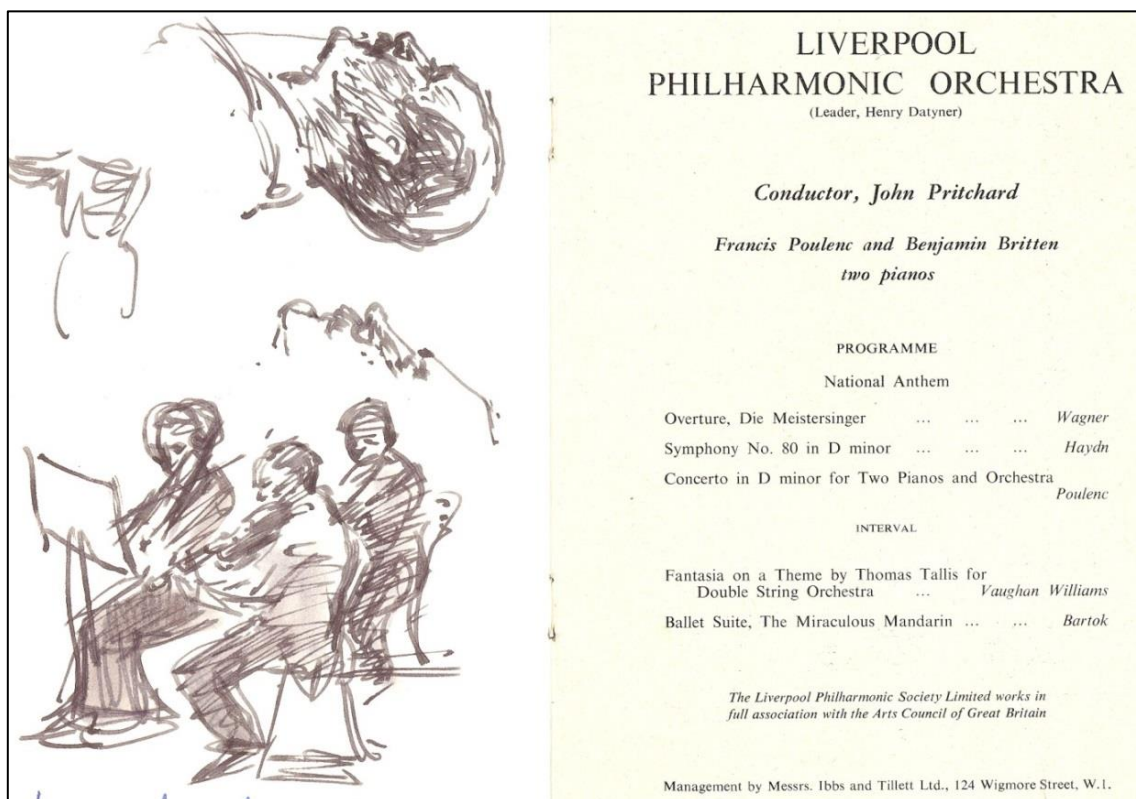
An extract from Keller's FA no.14, Mozart's String Quintet in G minor, K.516. [Add. MS 9371/23]
© Milein (Cosman) Keller. Reproduced by kind permission of The Cosman Keller Art and Music Trust.

Two years later, Keller was invited to join the BBC Music Division by its then Controller, William Glock, where he was to remain for the next 20 years as, variously, in charge of music talks, chamber music, orchestral and choral music, regional orchestras and new music. His was an extraordinarily rich contribution to the musical life of the Corporation: he gave himself wholeheartedly (or whole-mindedly, as he would have preferred to express it) to the task of ensuring that the BBC fulfilled its role as a cultural ambassador, particularly in his support for young composers and artists and in delivering the highest standards of production in all his programmes from the ten minute "In Short" occasional series of talks to full-scale music broadcasts, whether live or pre-recorded. He became the voice of the BBC to a generation of listeners to the Third Programme and the Home Service. However, Keller's relationship with the Corporation was not by any means an easy one and became distinctly difficult after he led his colleagues in challenging the proposals in the seminal 1969 report *Broadcasting in the seventies*, which set out how the BBC should reposition itself in the coming decade. It proposed, *inter alia*, instead of mixed programming, radio stations concentrating on a particular kind of programme. Thus the Third Programme would become Radio Three, with much of its talks output transferred to Radio Four, and, as a cost-cutting exercise, several of the regional orchestras would be disbanded.

Following his retirement from the BBC in March 1979, Keller entered an extraordinarily rich "third period" during which he not only continued to broadcast regularly and to write prolifically but also returned to coaching, teaching and lecturing. The Yehudi Menuhin School and The Guildhall School of Music both invited him to work with their string players and in particular to coach quartets. He advised Yehudi Menuhin on the approach to and format of his Violin Concours, taking this golden opportunity to advocate his anti-competition competition approach. Motor Neurone Disease finally claimed him on 6th November 1985. Fittingly, his last full-length piece of work was a monograph on his beloved Haydn Quartets, published posthumously in 1986.

"Hans Keller – a passionate soul, physically and spiritually consumed with the highest of missions: explaining the integrity, the truth, and the living immediacy of musical expression."

Yehudi Menuhin writing in the Foreword to *The Keller Column: essays by Hans Keller from 'Music & Musicians' magazine, 1984-5*. Edited by Robert Matthew-Walker. London, Lengnick & Co, 1990.



Programme for a concert by the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and John Pritchard given in the Royal Festival Hall on 16th January 1955 showing sketches of the musicians by Milein Cosman.

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Materials in the Keller Archive

In 1996, the papers from Hans Keller's estate were generously donated to Cambridge University Library by his widow, the artist Milein Cosman, forming the Hans Keller Archive. The Archive contains a diversity of materials including music manuscripts, manuscripts and typescripts of articles and monographs, concert programmes, radio talk scripts and many thousands of letters. Enquiries concerning the Hans Keller archive may be made via music@lib.cam.ac.uk

Outline of available materials:

- **Books and scores:** the Archive contains those books and scores from Keller's own library which he has annotated and/or which the Library does not hold a copy of itself.
- **Music Manuscripts:** all but one of the 15 Functional Analyses together with other music manuscripts by Keller and by other composers such as Judith Bingham, David Matthews and Bayan Northcott sent to him for comment.

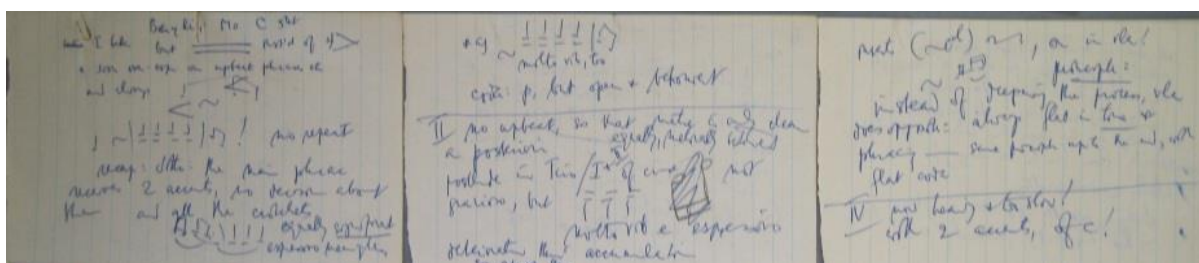
- Articles:** some 1,000 manuscripts and typescripts of his published and unpublished articles dating between 1939 – 1985. They comprise hundreds of reviews of concerts, festivals, operas, film music, recordings, newly-published music and first performances; book reviews covering not only music but also psychology, sport, literature and politics; regular columns for journals such as *The Listener*, *Spectator*, *Music and Musicians* and *New Statesman* which included elegant short pieces on football, on individual composers from Britten to Wagner via Skalkottas, Schoenberg, Mozart and his beloved Haydn, criticism and analysis (including his own Functional Analysis) and on political issues such as the future of the BBC. In these columns and other articles, he also explored with élan themes close to his heart – teaching, competitions and the concept of professionalism – and crafted many profoundly illuminating discussions of individual compositions from *Peter Grimes* to Haydn’s String Quartets. He wrote, always, with deep conviction, believing that at all costs, it was important to present the truth (as he saw it), however inconvenient.



- Monographs:** manuscripts of monographs including: *Criticism* (published by Faber 1987; ed. Julian Hogg), *A musical sketchbook* by Milein Cosman, edited by Hans Keller and Donald Mitchell. Oxford. Bruno Cassirer, 1957; *The Great Haydn Quartets: Their Interpretation*, London (Dent) 1986.
- Translations:** for example of Britten’s ‘Beggars’ Opera’ and essays by Erwin Stein published as *Orpheus in New Guises* in 1953.
- Radio scripts:** for the BBC (including papers relating to the infamous “Piotr Zak” affair), Radio Bremen, Norddeutscher Rundfunk and a number of other German-speaking radio stations.
- Papers for conferences** Keller attended: including the IMZ Congress 23 – 26 Sept 1973, Vienna “50 years of music on radio”; the XIII Maggio Musicale Fiorentino (1950); the Citizens’ Commission on Human Rights Symposium “A balance of views towards a better Mental Health Act”, 8 Dec 1977.



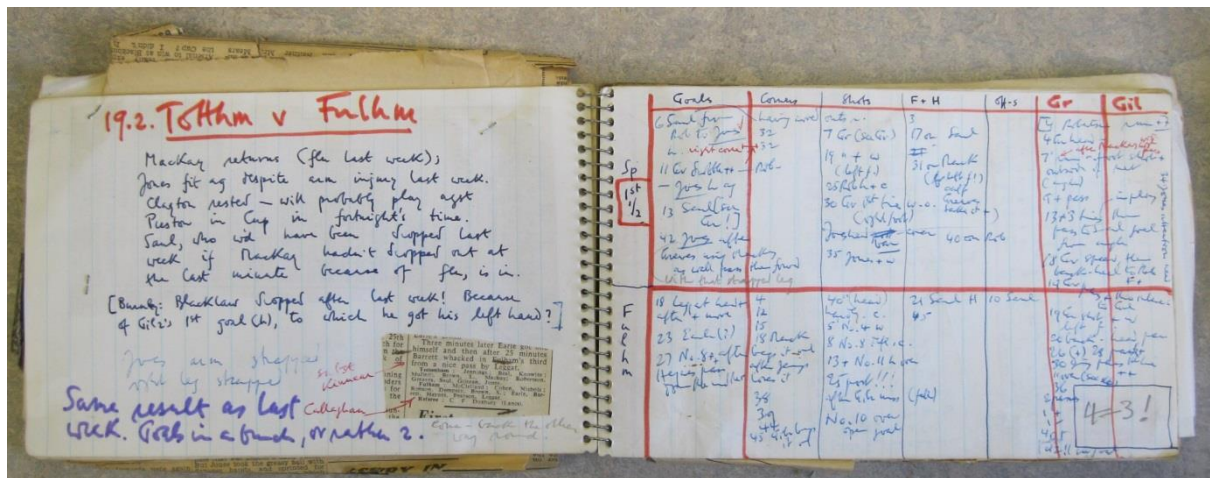
- Concert programmes:** the c.700 items include single concert programmes, concert handbills, brochures for music festivals such as Aldeburgh, Edinburgh, the Holland Festival, the Proms and Salzburg. All the major UK venues are represented with a particular emphasis on the Royal Albert Hall and the Festival Hall. There is a focus on programmes which include mid-20th century works, works by Schoenberg and chamber music of the Classical period. Many of the programmes contain annotations in Keller's handwriting both in German and English and some contain sketches by the artist Milein Cosman, Keller's wife. In many instances, original typescripts of programme notes and newspaper cuttings of reviews are also held.



Keller's notes on Mozart's String Quintet in C major, K.515 taken at a concert by the Barylli Quartet, Salzburg Festival 1954.
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- Record sleeve notes:** a modest number of typescripts, dating from the 1950s to the 1980s and including: Joseph Haydn. Trio in A major for Piano, Violin and cello (Hob.XV.18); Ludwig van Beethoven. Trio in E flat major for Piano, violin and cello (Op.1 No.1) - sleeve notes written in 1983 for the RCA recording by the Zingara Trio whom Keller coached.
- Personal papers:** encompassing Keller's notebooks, notes and drafts on psychology from the 1940s; a large number of similar notebooks and drafts on musical matters from the 1940s to the 1980s; pocket diaries, passports and other materials; his LRAM papers from 1942 – 43; letters written in reply to entries in the farewell book from the BBC, March 1979; a collection of letters to his mother Grete from various correspondents other than Keller himself; awards and certificates.

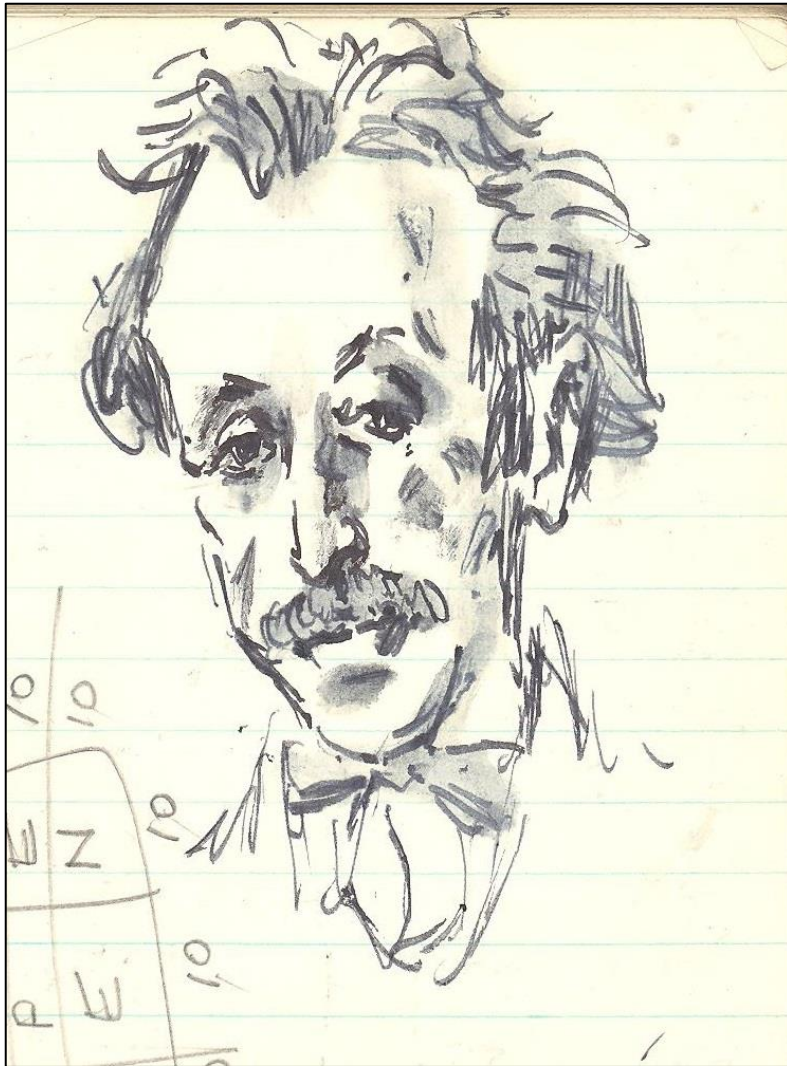
- **Football-related materials:** a range of programmes for matches and many notebooks containing Keller's detailed analysis of matches he attended.



Keller's analysis of a Spurs v Fulham match played on 19th February 1966.

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- **Press cuttings:** these include cuttings of articles by Keller, letters to the press from Keller, cuttings mentioning Keller and cuttings of topics of interest to Keller such as penal reform, WWII, The BBC, religion and psychology, sport.
- **Writings by others:** a small number of typescripts and manuscripts by others including Benjamin Frankel, Donald Mitchell, Matyas Seiber and Roger Sessions together with the typescript of Oskar Adler's *Die Kritik der Reinen Musik*.
- **Film music materials:** a mix of film brochures and publicity materials, 1942 – 1955, together with Keller's notes on a proportion of them.
- **Letters:** this is, by far, the most extensive element of the archive comprising some 6,000 items. Keller was a prolific correspondent, not only to his many colleagues and friends, but to the press, film companies, societies and institutions, broadcasting companies, journals, festivals, competitions, educational institutions and a wide range of other organisations. A proportion of the material is, naturally, simply concerned with the practical issues of a forthcoming talk, meeting or visit, but the majority offer a comprehensive insight into Keller's world view. They encompass his thoughts on the compositional process, on the state of music education, on the concept of the music competition, on the role of the BBC, on the responsibilities of a music critic, present detailed commentaries on performances, insight into individual works, challenges to his addressees on political and ethical issues and in some cases are unabashed polemics on a topic about which he feels deeply. What is also much in evidence, however, is his generosity of spirit in supporting and encouraging friends and colleagues in their many and varied endeavours.



Portrait of Hans Keller by Milein Cosman from a 1950s notebook.
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In sum, the archive offers through its rich variety of primary source materials, a unique opportunity for researchers to explore the output and the character of one of the most influential figures of the 20th Century classical music world.

SW June 2016

"...as you know, I have always been concerned with truth, however misconceived, rather than with taste; and unlike taste, truth doesn't change." [Keller to Donald Mitchell, July 1970]

"...there isn't a single compositorial innovation between Haydn and our own times (all of Beethoven's included) which can't be traced back to Haydn....I would even include atonality and... serialism..."
[Keller to Alexander Goehr, Dec 1984]