Johanna Kinkel’s production was extremely versatile. Highly appreciated during her period in Bonn as the director of the “Singkränzchen” (“Singers’ Circle”) and as a pedagogue, becoming well known in Berlin as a pianist and composer of lieder, she received important stimuli from her encounter with the theologian Gottfried Kinkel. She was the only woman who composed for the Bonn poets’ circle “Maikäferbund” (“Cockchafers’ Association”). In the revolution year of 1848, she took over the editorship of the “Neue Bonner Zeitung” and fought for the release of her imprisoned husband.


Due to her liberal thinking and actions, Johanna Kinkel was frequently exposed to the hostilities of her environment. Especially in Bonn, the divorce from her first husband, her conversion to Protestantism and her marriage to Gottfried Kinkel, as well as her political activities, created quite a stir.

Cities an countries

Johanna Kinkel received her first musical training in Bonn, which she continued in Berlin beginning in 1836. After more than two years, she returned to Bonn and lived in London after her emigration in 1851.

Biography

Johanna Kinkel, born on 8 July 1810 in Bonn, received her initial musical training from Franz Anton Ries, who had also taught Beethoven. She soon took over the leadership, as conductor, of the “Singkränzchen” founded by him. After the failure of her first marriage to the music dealer Johann Paul Mathieux, she went to Berlin – encouraged by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy – to receive further training. In the metropolis, she finally found the breeding ground to develop musically and intellectually. She studied piano with Wilhelm Taubert and composition with Karl Böhmer, earning her livelihood by teaching music and composing lieder that were published in Berlin for the first time. At first she lived in the house of Bettina von Arnim and soon made contact with the most highly regarded salons in the city. Here, she became acquainted with Fanny Hensel, amongst others, and partici-
Kinkel, Johanna

pated in “Sunday musicales”. Intending to sort out her divorce case, she returned to Bonn, where she met her later husband, the theologian Gottfried Kinkel (1815-1882), during the course of her activities for the Musical Society there, and decided not to return to Berlin. Together they founded the “Maikäferbund”, a poets’ circle committed to art criticism.

Four children were born to Johanna and Gottfried Kinkel: Gottfried (1844-1891), Johanna (1845-1863), Adelheid (1846-1927) and Herrmann (1848-1898). During the March Revolution of 1848, her husband actively participated in the uprisings, whilst Johanna Kinkel took over the editorship of the “Bonner Zeitung” and reported on current revolutionary events. After the successful escape of Gottfried Kinkel, who had been imprisoned during the Revolution, the family went to live in exile in London. In their new homeland, Johanna Kinkel contributed to the livelihood of the family by teaching music; at the same time she wrote the music-pedagogical discourse “Acht Briefe an eine Freundin über Clavier-Unterricht” (“Eight Letters to a Friend about Piano Teaching”), the essay “Friedrich Chopin als Komponist” (“Friedrich Chopin as a Composer”) and other music-theoretical observations as well as the autobiographically tinged novel “Hans Ibeles in London: A Family Portrait of Life as Refugees”).

Johanna Kinkel, whose state of health increasingly deteriorated during the London years, died in 1858 by falling out of a window. To the present day, it has not been determined with any certainty whether her death was the result of an accident or suicide.

More on Biography

Johanna Kinkel was born on 8 July 1810 in Bonn. Her father, Peter Joseph Mockel, who hailed from Cologne, was a theologian and taught at the Royal Gymnasium in Bonn. Both he and his wife Marianna, née Lamm, were musical, but were unwilling to encourage Johanna Kinkel’s musical and poetic talents, which revealed themselves early on, because it was important to comply with the “usual female educational scheme: school, cooking in a guest house and marriage” (Schulte 1908, p. 7).

She received her early musical education from Franz Anton Ries, who had once been Beethoven’s teacher. Ries must have recognised Johanna Kinkel’s abilities early on, for soon after founding the “Singkränzchen” in 1827, a singing group consisting of his pupils, the young woman musician took over its leadership. For Bonn, which had not until then had a very versatile musical life, this musical society became an important enrichment of concert life. Thus Johanna Kinkel, who was already active as a piano pedagogue, performed small ensemble pieces from operas in the homes of Bonn families.

Her Opus 1 was also written for the “Singkränzchen”: “The Birds’ Garden for Five Voices with Piano Accompaniment” with the subheading “Musical Joke”, in which her first experiences as a choral director are depicted in a humorous manner.

First marriage (1832-1840)

At the age of 22, Johanna Kinkel married the Cologne book and music dealer Johann Paul Mathieux, with whom she had become acquainted in 1831. If she had hoped for understanding and support of her musical activities from her husband, these hopes were fully dashed following her marriage. After only six months, she separated from him in 1833, returned to her parents’ house and filed for divorce (this was only implemented in 1840 due to Mathieux’s non-consent). Marriage had apparently affected her very badly, for a physician’s attestation of 1836 for the divorce court certified a “nervous breakdown with emaciation fever”; the reasons for these were the “abuses conveyed by selected torments” of her husband (cf. Weissweiler 1981, p. 221 f.).

Johanna Kinkel only gradually felt able to return to work for the Music Society, which had been without a leader because of her marriage. With the aim of reorganising the backward concert life of Bonn and offering transient artists possibilities of a higher standard, beyond their usual scope, she now rehearsed entire acts of operas. The performances often failed, however, due to “the philistine views of the fathers and mothers of my pupils, who found it improper to sing in the entrée concert of a foreign musician whose origins one did not precisely know” (cf. Weissweiler 1981, p. 222).

Berlin (1836-1839)

Intending to begin studies in music, she travelled to Berlin via Frankfurt am Main. Having met Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy in Frankfurt through his aunt, Dorothea Schlegel, she received words of acknowledgment concerning her musical talent, and it was recommended to her that she continue her education in Berlin. She ultimately remained there for over two years, studying piano with Wilhelm Taubert and composition with Karl Böhmer.
She earned her living as a music teacher, but also with the publication of her first lieder. She gradually overcame initial professional difficulties in the new city; her pedagogical and compositional abilities ultimately made her a busy piano teacher and a composer of lieder acknowledged in professional circles. Moreover, her contact with Bettina von Arnim (nee Brentano), in whose house she lived for five months and whose children she taught, soon opened up access to Berlin society and the best-known salons. Alongside her participation in Bettina von Arnim's literary circle "Lindenblatt", she was accepted into the musical circle of Fanny Hensel and participated in the latter's much-vaunted "Sonntagsmusiken" ("Sunday Musicals"). Much appreciated in Berlin was also her Rhenish humour, with which she was able to express herself most fittingly, both in music and in literature. In order to find more time and peace for her studies, she finally moved into her own flat, where she was now able to concentrate her entire attention on composing romantic songs with piano accompaniment. Already her first published volume of songs, Op. 7, issued in 1838 by Trawtmann in Berlin, was positively reviewed by the press. Thus Ludwig Rellstab praised the fact "that he counts these songs amongst the most original and beautiful that he has recently encountered" (cf. Lemke 1998, p. 58). These were songs to texts of Emanuel Geibel (No.1 and No. 6), August Kopisch, a text by the composer, and others by Heinrich Heine and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Much to the displeasure of the young artist, another review by Oswald Lorenz in the "Neue Zeitschrift für Musik" emphasised the "ladylike quality in the composition". When Robert Schumann requested that she send another composition for his journal, she took this as a "precious opportunity to pay back the reviewer for the 'gentle' and 'tender' designations. I wrote a very refined, prissy letter and sent my wildest drinking song for men's choir along with it, for which I myself wrote a real student text. I wish I could have seen the faces of my unknown correspondents when they sang through this nice surprise." (cf. Böttger 1977, p. 410f.)

Return to Bonn (1839) and marriage to Gottfried Kinkel (1843)

When Johanna Kinkel was informed by her parents in 1839 that "Herr Mathieux has declared himself prepared for a judicial divorce" (Schulte 1908, p. 15), she returned to Bonn. She did not realise her intention to remain in Bonn only for a short period of time, however. The divorce proceedings took longer than expected and cost a great deal of time and energy. She meanwhile resumed activity as a pedagogue and as director of the Choral Society, and organised domestic concerts modelled after those of Fanny Hensel (see Lemke 1998, p. 61). These also provided a venue for the performance of her own compositions. Alongside occasional pieces for diverse festivities, the setting of the Heine ballade "Don Ramiro", Op. 13 and the sacred choral work "Hymnus in Coena Domini", Op. 14 were performed. She conducted the performances or accompanied them at the piano. (Lemke 1998, p. 61)
The literary work begun at this time that became theatrical performances with musical features (Schulte 1908, p. 17) expanded the circle of persons interested in Kinkel, and attracted a number of writers. Amongst them were Karl Simrock, Wolfgang Müller, Christian Joseph Matzrath, Adolph Strodtmann and Gottfried Kinkel, later her husband. As a result of this, greater emphasis was placed on literature and, together with Gottfried Kinkel, at that time an external lecturer in Protestant theology, she finally founded the "Maikäferbund" ("Cockchafers' Association") in 1840. The association's journal "Der Maikäfer. Zeitschrift für Nicht-Philister" ("The Cockchafer: Journal for Non-Philistines") was issued weekly together with committed writers and interested students. The association represented a forum for exchanging ideas with kindred spirits and was orientated – as can be gathered from the subheading of the gazette – against bourgeois conformism. Moreover, the annual festival of its founding, on the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul (29 June), offered the opportunity to perform larger works. The acquaintances gained through this in turn stimulated Johanna Kinkel to make musical settings of the literary works thus created. Examples include the singspiel "Die Assassinnen" ("The Assassins") (1843) to a text by Gottfried Kinkel and "Otto der Schütz. Liederspiel in einem Akt" ("Otto the Shooter: Liederspiel in One Act") to a libretto by the composer herself.
The close relationship between the so-called "Direktrix" of the "Maikäferbund" and the "original cockchafer" himself, Gottfried Kinkel, remained only professional at first, for the theologian was already engaged to the daughter of a Protestant pastor. Although the mutual admiration of each other's abilities was initially in the foreground, a close friendship soon developed which led to a profound passion. This found expression only in the form of letters at first (Klaus 2008, p. 74), for the two were aware that a love between a divorced Catholic and an already engaged
Protestant theologian was unthinkable. It was ultimately the experience of a boating accident suffered together that finally led them to confess their love for each other. Gottfried Kinkel then broke off his engagement and, after a legal waiting period of three years, they were married on 22 May 1843, after Johanna had converted to Protestantism.

The period up until then – and afterwards – was marked by numerous difficulties. To start with, Gottfried Kinkel's marriage to a divorced Catholic was considered scandalous and caused quite an uproar in the city. He lost his position as curate and religion teacher, and the prospect of an appointment to the theological faculty was crushed because of this relationship (cf. Böttger 1977, p. 438ff.). People were also hostile to Johanna Kinkel, who lost some of her pupils (Wenzel 1994, p. 24). In order to contribute to their shared livelihood, Johanna Kinkel then sought pupils in Cologne (Wenzel 1994, p. 24). Gottfried Kinkel was able to transfer his habilitation to the philosophical faculty in 1845 with his essay “Geschichte der bildenden Künste bei den christlichen Völkern” (“History of the Pictorial Arts amongst the Christian Peoples”) (Klaus 2008, p. 135). In February 1846 he finally became Assistant Professor of Modern Art, Literary and Cultural History at the University of Bonn (Klaus 2008, p.138).

Years of marriage in Bonn (1843-1850)

Johanna Kinkel described her marriage as "ideally happy, even though there was no lack of external strokes of fate, illnesses and hardships" (according to Schulte 1908, p. 60).

Four children were born to the couple during the next six years: Gottfried (1844-1891), Johanna (1845-1863), Adelheid (1846-1927) and Herrmann (1848-1898) (cf. Klaus 2004, p. 5). During this time, alongside childrearing and homemaking, the "Maikäferbund" and the Musical Society, there was of course not much time for extensive occupation with music, although her biographer Schulte considered her living proof "that participation in the noblest educational aspirations of the day was indeed compatible with the fulfilment of all the duties of a housewife." (Schulte 1908, p. 50). As Schulte himself formulated it, merely "participation in educational aspirations" surely did not fulfil Johanna Kinkel. For, with the birth of the children, the possibilities of intellectual and musical production had been considerably limited, and priorities had to be relocated. "I no longer get the chance to hear any music. My grand piano is only used for the purpose of drying freshly ironed diapers. But things cannot continue like this. I shall open it up next week, for I yearn for a note of music. If I could give lessons to my stupidest pupils and play four-hand pieces by Wanhal, it would be a refreshment for me. But I must deny myself the possibility of swimming in my own element until the children have grown beyond the first dangerous years during which one dare not lose sight of them at any time." (cf. Wenzel 1994, p. 24; Klaus 2008, p. 137f.)

Despite her limited time, however, she directed "concertante" performances of Christoph Willibald Gluck's "Iphigenie in Aulis" and Louis Spohr's "Pietro von Abano", amongst other works, with great success. In addition, she wrote the novelette "Musikalische Orthodoxie" ("Musical Orthodoxy").

The Revolution and its consequences (1848-1851)

The heated atmosphere that prevailed in German cities after the February Revolution in Paris did not leave the Kinkels unaffected. During the course of these events, the "Maikäferbund" disintegrated, and the Choral Society, in which "discussions about revolution outweighed all musical interests", was disbanded (cf. Lemke 1998, p. 63).

Gottfried Kinkel's commitment to political events was very strong; he was one of the principal speakers at the first major revolutionary event in Bonn on 18 March 1848. He later took over the editorship of the "Bonner Zeitung", which became one of the leading democratic-republican newspapers of this period (Schnelling-Reinicke 1998, p. 289). When he was elected a representative for the Second Chamber in Berlin in 1849, Johanna Kinkel and Carl Schurz (a former student of Kinkel) took over the editorship of what was now called the "Neue Bonner Zeitung".

The newspaper, which became "a radical political organ of struggle" (Weissweiler 1981, p. 232) under Johanna Kinkel, contained reports about current occurrences of the Revolution, lending expression to the demands for democracy and freedom.

But Johanna Kinkel also formulated revolutionary appeals in musical form; she composed the "Demokratienlied", a call for democracy and humanity (with the memorable refrain "Heran, heran, heran Demokratie" - "Approach, approach, democracy approach"). She formulated another expression of her political convictions in the "Lied von der Bürgerwache" ("Song of the Civilian Guard", from "Anleitung zum Singen. Übungen und Lied-
1852, for example, he undertook a six-month agitation political activities. From September 1851 to February 1908, p. 91.) At first, Gottfried Kinkel was enlisted to undertake many of his political fame on the other hand. “(cf. Schulte English language on the one hand, and the consequences considerably more difficult by protracted illnesses. In ad-

Life in London was full of hardships and marked by numerous illnesses. “The unending difficulty of finding a secure source of income in the megalopolis, which was moreover overrun with refugees of all nations, was made considerably more difficult by protracted illnesses. In addition, there was [Gottfried] Kinkel’s ignorance of the English language on the one hand, and the consequences of his political fame on the other hand.” (cf. Schulte 1908, p. 91)

At first, Gottfried Kinkel was enlisted to undertake many political activities. From September 1851 to February 1852, for example, he undertook a six-month agitation trip to the USA, leaving Johanna Kinkel to provide a livelihood for the family through music teaching. She hardly found peace, for her house “had practically become a commission office for refugees in search of work” (ibid., p. 96f.). She wrote to Fanny Lewald in November 1851: “How am I? I could be splendid if I could live just for my own affairs. But countless people claim me for their concerns. Each one needs perhaps just a few of my days or hours, doesn’t even feel obliged to thank me, thinks I could have done ten times as much – but these days and hours add up to a burden that destroys my existence. I am being buried alive with all my talents, am nothing but a duty machine.” (Lewald 1888, p. 13)

It was only after Gottfried Kinkel had found a permanent position that a certain normality was restored, and Johanna Kinkel was again able to occupy herself more intensively with music and literature. She had meanwhile made a name for herself as a pianist and pedagogue, and founded a singing school at her house. Her Opus 20, now entitled “Songs for Little Children”, as well as her “Acht Briefe an eine Freundin über Clavier-Unterricht” (“Eight Letters to a Friend about Piano Teaching”) were translated into English. (Lemke 1998, p. 64).

During the last years of her life, Johanna Kinkel primarily dedicated herself to musicological work based on studies in the British Museum. Her urge to create remained unabated; she wrote to her friend Auguste Heinrich: “I have been engaged to give lectures on music, and it seems that these have been successful. This gives me joy, not so much because it’s better business than teaching lessons, but because I have discovered within me the ability, at an older age, to embrace a completely new life activity. I have gradually returned to the sphere of my earlier strivings, which are more appropriate for me. As long as the children were small, it seemed to be my duty to kill all the tendencies of my spirit that could distract me from the most immediate cares. What had lain under the snow, now suddenly wants to sprout forth.” (Kinkel 1857, cf. Rieger p. 92f.).

A successful lecture on Chopin was followed by others on Beethoven, Mozart and Mendelssohn. Shortly prior to her sudden death, she completed the two-volume novel “Hans Ibeles in London. Ein Familienbild aus dem Flüchtlingsleben” (“Hans Ibeles in London. A Family Portrait of Life as Refugees”) depicting the life of an emigrant family settled in a milieu of musicians.

Johanna Kinkel, who increasingly suffered from heart complaints during the London years, fell out from a third-storey window of her house on 15 November 1858. It re-
mains unclear whether her death was due to an accident or to suicide.

Appreciation

Johanna Kinkel left behind not only an extensive musical oeuvre, but also works in the areas of musicology, music pedagogy, journalism and literature. She initially succeeded with lieder that were also appreciated in specialist circles. During the period of the Revolution of 1848, she distinguished herself with settings of her own poems in which she formulated political appeals. She also wrote stage plays, but some of these have been lost and none were published. Her music-pedagogical writings, such as the “Acht Briefe an eine Freundin über Clavier-Unterricht” (“Eight Letters to a Friend about Piano Teaching”), not only reveal pedagogical farsightedness, but also take a stand on the “piano epidemic” (5th letter) of salon society and the cult of the virtuoso and of the dilettante (6th letter) connected with it. In her narrative about musicians, she also reflects on the customary gender roles in the bourgeois music business and on the romantic artist-type. In her novella “Musical Orthodoxy”, she also describes her detachment from old music; after all, she grew up in the “orthodox camp” in Bonn with Franz Anton Ries in which “Beethoven stood before me as the musical God and Rossini as the Antichrist.” (cf. Weissweiler 1981, p. 219).

Her farsightedness regarding future musical developments is revealed in the essay “Friedrich Chopin als Komponist” (“Friedrich Chopin as a Composer”), in which she remarks: "The spirit of a new music has come via Chopin; he has revealed it in melodies that flow around him like dreams of the future. The present intervals are almost too wide to reproduce his ethereal intervals; for this reason, they reluctantly creep through the chromatic circumstances of the scales, searching for the still finer relationships that enharmonic changes offer. [...] He knocks at the still mysteriously locked gates of quarter-tones, which will one day, in later centuries, be what the minor second is to us, and what the third was to our ancestors." (ibid., p. 226)

Reception

In the earlier history of this composer’s reception, one frequently meets with a remark by Emanuel Geibel, who wrote the following about Johanna Kinkel: "Generally, boundlessness is her failing, for she is so endowed with talent that she is not a genius in any one area." (cf. Rieger 1988, p. 243) The fact that Johanna Kinkel's multi-faceted production is the result of the circumstances of her life was, of course, not recognised here. For it is precisely this many-sided, intertwining confrontation with music which finds expression in social observations, music-theoretical studies and pedagogical writings, and withstands any accusation of dilettantism. Since Johanna Kinkel could not primarily establish herself for her composing, and was frequently only perceived in connection with Gottfried Kinkel in the broader reception, it was only with the beginning of gender studies in the 1980s that Johanna Kinkel also received the recognition that was her due. Withal, Eva Weissweiler noted that there was no entry for Johanna Kinkel in the first edition of "Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart" (1949-1987) (Weissweiler 1981, p. 183). This lexical void has been filled in the second, newly processed edition of "Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart" (1994-2007), but further research is needed in order to gain a better overview of her compositions and life’s work and to be able to better classify them.

The research of the Bonn region focussed attention on the musician for a longer period of time, making use of the jubilees (2008 and 2010) in order to appraise the production of Johanna Kinkel. A biography by Monica Klaus entitled “Johanna Kinkel: Romantik und Revolution”, which was based, amongst other things, on the correspondence of 689 letters of the Kinkel couple from the years 1840 to 1858, was published by Böhlau Verlag in 2008; this correspondence - in three volumes, also by Monica Klaus - was published in the same year together with the Bonn Municipal Archive.

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of her death, a gala concert organised by the Bonn Municipal Museum and University Club took place on 15 November 2008. The exhibition “Johanna Kinkel (1810-1858) und ihr kulturelles Umfeld in Bonn, Berlin und London” (“Johanna Kinkel (1810-1858) and Her Cultural Surroundings in Bonn, Berlin and London”) at the Ernst Moritz Arndt House in Bonn (13 May to 12 June 2009) shed comprehensive light on the life and work of the artist for the first time.

On the occasion of Johanna Kinkel’s 200th birthday, there was a book presentation and reading (“Johanna Kinkel. Eine Auswahl aus den schönsten Texten von Johanna Kinkel” [“Johanna Kinkel: A Selection from the Most Beautiful Texts by Johanna Kinkel”], issued by the Bonn Municipal Museum), a “Führung auf den Spuren von Johanna Kinkel in Bonn” (“Tour on the Trail of Johanna Kinkel in Bonn”), as well as a moderated festive event on
10 July 2010 with readings and music from texts and compositions of Johanna Kinkel, organised by the Bonn Municipal Museum at the Ernst Moritz Arndt House.

Research

The estate of Johanna and Gottfried Kinkel is housed in the Bonn University and State Library. This generally includes the most varied correspondence, certificates and documents, as well as manuscripts of the poems and manuscripts of the “Maikäfer” of years 1-7. Also included are Gottfried Kinkel’s sermon manuscripts of 1839-1841, the manuscript of Gottfried Kinkel’s journal of 1840-1846 and the stage play “Die Assassinnen” (“The Assassins”) as well as the farewell letter to Kinkel from his pupils in 1841 and the removal from office by Bonn University of 12 July 1849.


Further material is found in the Municipal Archive and the Bonn Municipal Historical Library (StAB) as well as in the Stuttgart State Library.

Detailed information on the location of sources is in: Monica Klaus, "Romantik und Revolution", Cologne, Böhlau Verlag, 2008, p. 345f.

Need for Research

There is a need for research in the scholarly presentation of the stage works, existing for the most part in manuscript form, and of the writings and letters, in order to be able to better classify and appraise the significance and importance of Johanna Kinkel.

Authority control

Virtual International Authority File (VIAF):
- http://viaf.org/viaf/14869042

Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (GND):
- http://d-nb.info/gnd/118562258

Library of Congress (LCCN):
- http://lccn.loc.gov/n83211996