



THE LANGUAGE OF TONALITY in the music of Bach to Bruckner

Hermann Beckh

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Hermann BECKH - The Language of Tonality Why are musical works named by their keys: "Mass in B minor", "Symphony in D major", and so on? Can certain things be said best, or even "only", in certain keys? Can we hear the essence of a key? Are "subjective" and "objective" relevant, or is there a higher synthesis? How could the common chord express so much musical variety for over three centuries, and for some decades concentrated in one city, Vienna, in Central Europe? Hermann BECKH's (1875-1937) tone-zodiac - by 1922, not the first to be suggested - is still respected almost a century on. With it, he explores the motivating power in our tonal system as lived - nobody's invention, so in no way a "theory". The author - acknowledged polymath who also wrote music - played on the piano all the music mentioned in this pioneer study. In his explanation of tonality as an organising, creative principle, Beckh cites music from Bach - effectively the father of tonality - concluding with Wagner's music dramas. Beckh's apparently unique perspective on Wagner is one excellent reason to re-visit him, and Beckh, too, because his tone-zodiac invites access into the workshop of creation. Beckh extends the concept of "music" and "musical". The profession of music is not challenged, but upheld - from within. To see music as "abstract", or deriving from sonic vibrations are both challenged. Through Beckh's holistic intuition, the reader is invited "backstage" to research creativity itself. There is a practical path beyond the restrictions of dualism, beyond all "feel-good" factors - whether of "Mozart", "Wagner", or any other - in order to research "what is". In-depth researchers already recognise Prof. Dr Hermann Beckh as a pioneer; musicians and music-lovers will gain innumerable enriching insights and stimuli. But even more, in telling us least about himself, and without notating a single musical example, the author is able to tell us a very great deal about the personality - of his reader. Beckh on Beckh, and by his colleagues: "In all other respects I stand on the shoulders of my predecessors in scholarship, and my particular view of life I owe to Rudolf Steiner; but in music, I feel I am really breaking ground." Steiner himself said of him in this respect, "Beckh ventures into provinces which I have not yet had an opportunity of investigating myself. And there is a great deal in what Beckh says about them." There are not many people of whom Rudolf Steiner would have made such a remark. (Alfred Heidenreich. 1938)

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