

Wilhelm Keller (1920 – 2008) – Magister Ludi Musici

Artist – Composer – Researcher – Educator – Humanist – Pacifist – Visionary

An attempt to sketch a rich and intensively committed life.

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Abstract

Wilhelm Keller, composer, music theorist and music teacher, met Carl Orff personally in Salzburg in 1949. As a young student of composition, he had already experienced a performance of "Catulli Carmina" in Leipzig in the autumn of 1943 and on the same evening had seen a performance of "Carmina Burana" with choreography by Mary Wigman.

The contact between Orff and Keller continued. The young Keller is equally fascinated by the artistic as well as the pedagogical work of Carl Orff and from the 1950s onwards offers his cooperation in the dissemination of the Orff-Schulwerk which Orff accepted gratefully. In 1950 he entrusted Keller with the introduction to Orff-Schulwerk at the Conference for Contemporary Music and Music Education in Bayreuth.

But it would be completely wrong to dismiss Wilhelm Keller simply as a "disciple of Orff". Throughout his entire life, Keller was a strong, independent artistic and pedagogical personality, which led to a certain distancing between Orff and Keller in later years.

Keller was a person with many talents and interests and someone who always interfered courageously when he observed that fundamental human rights of disadvantaged people were being disregarded.

As early as the 1960s, Keller began to apply the ideas of the Orff-Schulwerk within the framework of therapy, curative and social pedagogy. To this end, he created new material for music education in his series of publications "Ludi musici" (Musical Games) which is still used today.

Since he was not a man of half-measures, he also actively intervened in educational and socio-political issues and thus became a pioneer of inclusive music education in the sense of an open society.