

In England, nothing else remains for the lawyer and composer but music

Dr. Max Kowalski

10 August 1882 Kowal – 4 June 1956 London

From his early youth Max Kowalski lived in Frankfurt am Main, where he graduated from secondary school with the *Abitur* at the Lessing Gymnasium. He studied law in Heidelberg, Berlin and Marburg. At Marburg University he earned a doctorate and was awarded the title of Dr. jur. After having established himself as a *Rechtsanwalt* he started specializing in copyright and publishing law. Kowalski was registered in the list of lawyers admitted to the Regional Court on 30 September 1909 and appointed as a notary on 19 April 1924. His office was located at Neue Mainzer Straße 76.

Alongside his legal practice, Max Kowalski studied music in Berlin with Bernhard Sekles and classical singing with Alexander Heinemann from 1909 onwards. It did not take long before he made a name for himself as a composer and *Lied* interpreter. Kowalski was one of the masters of the late Romantic *Lied*. He enjoyed particular success with 12 poems taken from Albert Giraud's "*Pierrot Lunaire*" which he set to music. One of his friends was composer Arnold Schoenberg, whom he represented, among other cases, in a legal dispute with the Frankfurt Opera – Schoenberg was against the opera house's intended way of staging the world première of his opera "*Von heute auf morgen*" (From One Day to the Next). Kowalski managed to achieve an understanding between the parties.

Since Max Kowalski was considered a '*Altanwalt*' (Senior Lawyer) he was not included in the first prohibition to practice imposed on Jewish lawyers in 1933 and was able to continue until 1938. When he learned that his admission as a lawyer was going to be deleted as of 1 December 1938 he filed an application for admission as a '*Konsulent*' (Legal Consultant) in November 1938, which was rejected at first, but finally granted. During the wave of arrests made in the wake of the November 1938 pogrom, Kowalski was deported to Buchenwald concentration camp. Upon his release he immigrated to England in 1939. All the files he had worked on as a '*Konsulent*' he handed over to Dr. Georg Jonathan Hoeniger. In Great Britain he worked as a piano tuner, singing teacher and synagogue choir singer. Aged 73, Max Kowalski died in London in 1956.

Barbara Dölemeyer



Max Kowalski

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Dear Dr. Kowalski,
Publishers are a difficult matter, almost impossible. There are not many outside Germany. Austrian publishers are out of the question. The only one I know is the Universal Edition, but I know that they do not want to publish anything for the time being. If you still want to try, I am of course at your disposal. - I do not know of any Swiss publishers. And I am sure that the remaining handful of foreign publishers (Riccardi, Durant, Hansen, etc.) will not publish anything with German lyrics. But most of all, these gentlemen are of course aware that we are in a really bad situation and that moreover the German market, which is an important one, will be lost – and they use this situation to put pressure on us. You would be very surprised about the unfavourable terms that I would have to accept, had I not decided to wait. But wait - what for?
Unfortunately, this is all I can tell you since, as you can see, my own situation is hardly favourable either. Perhaps you could try Wilhelm Hansen in Copenhagen, Gothersgade. However, I am afraid he will not pay much either. - I myself am doing as well as could be expected, given the circumstances; which means that I do not know what will happen tomorrow.
As for the rest, I am finishing a small 'work', a concerto for string quartet and orchestra based on a Concerto Grosso by Händel. Once this is finished, I might turn to my own work.
Otherwise I have no news to tell you: I do not know if I will stay in France or in Europe at all, for that matter. Who can take decisions these days?? I will presumably stay in Paris.
Now you have heard my most important news. I wish you the best of luck with your Lieder. I would have liked to take a look at them. – But since I can never tell if I might be forced to leave unexpectedly, I shall rather not burden myself with another person's property.
With many cordial greetings, Arnold Schönberg

Paul Arnold, Geschichte der Frankfurter Juden, vol. 3, p. 252.

Letter from Schönberg to Max Kowalski, Frankfurt/Main, 26.8.1933