

Ceremonial Groundbreaking for the Broadcasting House in Berlin (May 29, 1929)

Abstract

In this recording, the pioneering radio announcer and engineer Friedrich Georg Knöpfke reports on the May 1929 cornerstone-laying ceremony that began construction of the Haus des Rundfunks [Broadcasting House] in Berlin, a state-of-the-art facility to house the rapidly growing new medium of radio. The renowned architect Hans Poelzig designed the building specifically for the requirements of radio, including a curved exterior wall, for instance, to shield the studios from the street noise outside. Radio had, by 1929, found its way into around 3 million households, spurred by the falling cost of receivers and the rising diversity of programming. Knöpfke's voice, and his iconic station identification "Achtung, Achtung! Hier ist die Sendestelle Berlin!," had greeted listeners since the inauguration of regular German broadcasting in 1923, and so his coverage of this occasion was especially apt. Here, Knöpfke echoes the other officials present at the ceremony by underscoring the power of radio to bring people together, to educate, and to inspire the imagination. Such sentiments reflected the hopes and ambitions for the new medium in its infancy, and early programming catered to a range of tastes, from classical music to gymnastics instruction, to national and international news, to lectures on art and science. In keeping with these ambitions, the radio station even maintained its own symphony orchestra, which played the overture to Wagner's opera *Die Meistersinger* at the end of this 1929 ceremony. Construction of the facility finished in 1931, and radio broadcasts directly from the Haus des Rundfunks began in January of that year.

Source

Knöpfke: We are laying the foundation stone of a house of great, true friendship. From here, over the years, people with the clarity of their voice, their convictions, their art, and their knowledge will serve the whole world. From here they will go to their fellow human beings without leaving the house that will rise above this stone. In this house, sparks of love, joy, and encouragement for all that is beautiful, true, and great will be kept alive. We want to remember this every time we call this future building the Funkhaus.

[...]

From the Funkhaus, performances of German art and German science are to be broadcast to all German regions to almost three million German radio subscribers at present and far beyond Germany's borders to the whole world. May this house be a place of true culture for the present and future generations.

Present at the laying of the foundation stone were the chairman of the supervisory board and the managing director, Stückelen and Merten. We now place the building certificate in a cassette and enclose the text of the speech that was delivered here. Likewise, a transcript of the words that were spoken over the ceremonial hammer blows. We also enclose a number of books and writings that reflect the state of current broadcasting. While the radio orchestra plays the prelude to the *Meistersinger* to conclude the ceremony, the cassette will be soldered shut and walled into the foundation stone. [Music]

Source: Grundsteinlegung zum "Haus des Rundfunks" in Berlin-Charlottenburg, Masurenallee, May 29, 1929. Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv K000803778

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