

Stefan Großmann, “The Radio Critic” (1926)

Abstract

The Austrian journalist and writer Stefan Großmann (1875-1935) had been publishing the weekly *Das Tage-Buch* since 1920 with the support of publisher Ernst Rowohlt. As an independent magazine aimed primarily at an educated, left-wing democratic audience, it competed with the *Weltbühne* in the press landscape of the Weimar Republic. In this commentary from 1926, Großmann humorously describes the wide range of radio programs on offer. The first radio broadcast in Germany had taken place in December 1920. However, the government initially banned private households from receiving radio broadcasts due to fears that plans for a coup could be transmitted by radio. After this ban was lifted in 1923, radio quickly developed into a mass medium and by the end of 1925, more than one million households in Germany had already registered a radio set (for which a license fee was charged).

Source

The Radio Critic

I have always admired my friend Ernst Rowohlt, not only since he made Wilhelm II popular, but from the very day when, at the end of a wine-soaked evening, he began to eat the glass from which he had been drinking. Anyone can publish books, but devouring glass!

But now I have found someone who has an even better stomach. By comparison, eating glass is nothing; I don't wish to reveal his name, only his profession: he is a radio critic. He sits, if one can believe the brief accounts he publishes every Sunday, by the headset every day, or rather, the headset sits on his skull, and now he is devouring the following: the play “Doctor Klaus” by L'Arronge with Alfred Braun, 200 years of orchestral music (dedicated to Beethoven), an hour of worship by Leopold Schmidt, spiced with anecdotes. Paul Lincke's humorous-melodious operetta “Lady Venus,” Rüdels' choral group, Advent songs by the radio choir, Otto Ernst's affable Winter Solstice tale, read by Alfred Braun, then a couple of breezy mandolinists, the solo quartet Patria, then another 200 years of orchestral music, Mozart's Jupiter Symphony, followed by Hans Brennert, Paul Graetz, and Alfred Braun. This is Berlin-style nourishment for the receptive man. But additionally he also hears [broadcasts] from Dortmund, Elberfeld, Hamburg, Königsberg, Breslau, Frankfurt a. M., Vienna, Prague, and Stockholm. He listens to a Puccini festival in Elberfeld, a Richard Dehmel festival in Hamburg, Hans Reimann in Königsberg, Bach's organ fugues from London, Reinhard Sorge's drama “The Beggar” in Elberfeld, Schützendorf in Berlin sings Löwe's ballads, Kiel refreshes Gluck (who refreshes the critic?), from Breslau comes the sound of Fulda's “The Lost Daughter,” from Frankfurt “Robert and Bertram,” Stuttgart animates Mendelssohn, Vienna Stefan Zweig, Stockholm offers German lessons via Göteborg. Danzig explains Hauptman's female characters, Agram is buzzed through by Bonsel's “Maya the Bee,” Münster offers a Handel festival, Dublin broadcasts German music, Budapest children's fairy tales (not by Horthy), and Gleiwitz recounts the life of a miner.

I have had to leave out some of the pleasures that assail the admirable man during a normal week, without holidays. By now, the poor man has already been listening for a year or two, listening and critiquing, is constantly enjoying Beethoven and Fulda; a few times a day he hears Alfred Braun, Leopold Schmidt, spiced by anecdotes. Otto Ernst and Mozart and Paul Lincke; he listens and reports. For two years now he has been sitting by the receiver, this hapless soul; he harkens to Berlin, Graz, Dublin, Gleiwitz, and Stockholm, harkens and reviews. It must be more terrible than the treadmill described by Wilde, and, if the man doesn't collapse, it is a job for life, or, to put it more cruelly, he is a lifer. I would know of only *one* man who could take in this wealth of artistic pleasures without difficulty, because

mind, heart, and nerves predestine him to this rare capacity for absorption: Julius *Bab*. He would tolerate this work for decades, and in the end a three-volume work, “Aesthetic of the Radio,” would even come out of it, and it would be published by Deutsche Verlagsanstalt in Stuttgart.

Source: Stefan Großmann, “Der Radiokritiker,” *Das Tage-Buch*, Berlin, December 18, 1926, Heft 51, Jahrgang 7, pp. 1956–57.

Translation: Thomas Dunlap

Recommended Citation: Stefan Großmann, “The Radio Critic” (1926), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/weimar-germany-1918-1933/ghdi:document-4615>> [March 16, 2026].