Arnold Schoenberg [Schönberg]

born Vienna, Sept 13, 1874; died Los Angeles, July 13, 1951

Documents associated with this :

- Correspondence
- Diaries
- Other material

Austrian composer, earliest representative of Viennese musical modernism, creator of the twelve-tone method of composition, teacher of Alban Berg, Anton von Webern, and other composers in Vienna, Berlin, and, from 1934 on, in the USA.

Relations between Schoenberg and Schenker

Contact between Schenker and Schoenberg was made first by the latter on September 12, 1903, after he had been engaged by Busoni to orchestrate Schenker's *Syrische Tänze für Pianoforte zu 4 Händen* (Vienna: Weinberger, c.1899). The orchestration was not to Schenker's taste because it "suggests the style of Richard Strauss," but he evidently approved it, for the resulting performance took place on November 5, 1903. Schoenberg subsequently tried between November 10, 1903 and early 1904 to enlist Schenker's participation in forming the Vereinigung schaffender Tonkünstler (Association of Creative Musicians). Communications between the two continued into 1907, when Schoenberg drew Schenker's attention to two concerts of his music (both of which Schenker attended and reported in his diary) and invited him to one of music by his pupils. The two evidently met several times, and were apparently on cordial terms until around 1910, when their relationship deteriorated.

Although Schoenberg's musical style had its origins partly in Brahms and the Viennese Classical composers, Schenker became increasingly antagonistic toward him from around 1910 because he saw him as advancing the stylistic innovations of Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler, abandoning the Classical tonal tradition, and in the realm of theory espousing developing variation over repetition.

Breakdown of Cordialities

The breakdown between the two men was perhaps impelled by Emil Hertzka's contracting Schoenberg for Universal Edition in 1909 along with Mahler, Schreker, and Foerster; the issuing of UE's 1910 catalogue announcing Schoenberg's Second String Quartet and *Drei Klavierstücke*, Op. 11 may have been the catalyst for Schenker's antagonism. First private signs of this were Schenker's allusion to "a publisher that places its main emphasis these days on anti-musical music" in his letter to Hertzka of February 7, 1910, WSLB 52, which conveys Schenker's disillusionment with Hertzka's break from UE's original 1901 commitment to an Austrian edition of the "classics." His resentment at what he saw as Hertzka's promotion of Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre* over his own works emerges in WSLB 75, May 17, 1911, and three years later he suggests that UE should use its profits from Mahler's and Schoenberg's music to subsidize its publication of his own writings, OJ 5/16, [2], May 1914 (draft).

The first step in the public confrontation between the two, Schoenberg's response to
Schenker's diatribes against Strauss and Reger in Harmonielehre (1906) and the Foreword to Kontrapunkt 1 (1910), was delivered in his own Harmonielehre (1911 and lengthened in the 1921 edition). Schenker's most sustained, personalised critique, of the chordal treatment of passing-tones in Schoenberg's Harmonielehre, appeared in Das Meisterwerk in der Musik, vol. II (1926), pp. 30-37 (Eng. transl., vol. II, 12-16).

Correspondence between Schoenberg and Schenker
Correspondence between the two men comprises twelve personal letters from Schoenberg to Schenker, which survive only in photocopies in OJ 14/15 (see also OJ 60/2), plus one circular letter from Zemlinsky, Gutheil, and Schoenberg, and two invitations; none are known to have survived from Schenker to Schoenberg.

Bibliography: See especially:

Correspondence

Schoenberg reports his progress on orchestrating Schenker's Syrische Tänze, and raises the matter of his fee for the work. He has approached Busoni about having his own symphonic poem performed.

Schoenberg accepts Schenker's offer [unspecified], and hopes to see him in Vienna two days later.

Schoenberg will visit Schenker the next day.

Schoenberg has delivered No. 3 of the Syrische Tänze and hopes to deliver No. 4 the next day.
Schoenberg inquires whether Schenker has yet sent the [orchestral] materials to Busoni.

Schoenberg needs to speak with Schenker.

Invitation to attend a meeting to discuss the promotion of new music in Vienna through education and performance.

Invitation to an "Ansorge-Grube-Schönberg evening."

Schoenberg expresses disappointment, and tells Schenker the time and place of the next subcommittee meeting [of the Vereinigung schaffender Tonkünstler].


Schoenberg encourages Schenker to attend the next meeting [concerning the Vereinigung schaffender Tonkünstler], and invites him to his home for supper on Friday.

Schoenberg tries to clarify his position vis-à-vis Schenker, and urges him to attend the Thursday sub-committee [of the Vereinigung schaffender Tonkünstler].

Schoenberg expresses disappointment at Schenker's non-attendance, and hopes he can attend the performances of his String Quartet [No. 1] and [First] Chamber Symphony on February 5 and 8.

Invitation to a concert of music by pupils of Schoenberg.

Karpath exchanges newspaper clippings with Schenker. — Announces a forthcoming review of Schenker's monograph on Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (1912). — Tells of a potential new pupil for Schenker who is currently studying with Schreker. — Complains at being persecuted by supporters of Schoenberg.

Acknowledges one postcard; the other reaches him while writing the letter. Reports and comments on article by Hans Friedrich in Der Merker. Remarks on the nature of hatred, national and personal, in wartime.

OJ 15/16, [34] **Handwritten letter from Weisse to Schenker, dated February 26, 1918** [http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/correspondence/OJ-15-16_34.html]

Weisse expresses his concerns about a proposed Festschrift in celebration of Schenker's fiftieth birthday, fearing that the work will be written largely by eminent people and journalists who have little knowledge of his teaching and so will not do justice to him as a theorist; asks Schenker for his own opinion of the matter.


Apparently having returned from a visit to Vienna, Violin expresses his joy at having seen Schenker recently.

DLA 69.930/10 **Handwritten letter from Schenker to Halm, dated September 25, 1922** [http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/correspondence/DLA-69.930-10.html]

Acknowledges OJ 11/35, 20 and composition; expects to be able to comment on Halm's Klavierübung in Tonwille 4; reports Leipzig University's decision not to appoint him; speculates on the impact of Kontrapunkt 2 and Der freie Satz; public difficulty in accepting Urgesetze. — Aristide Briand: The importance of being well-read on a topic before commenting in public: Schoenberg and Reger; newspapers. — Maximilian Harden: although faithful to Schenker, Harden had not mastered the topics on which he wrote. — National Govenment: Schenker's publishing plans, including "The Future of Humanity": man's anthropomorphic thinking is a delusion, he needs to adapt to nature, to return to a primitive state, to abandon "development" and "progress" and return to primordial laws; inferior man wants to "govern" (bowel wants to become brain); Schenker deplores "artifice" (French) as against nature (German). — Things French: praises German superiority over French in its joy of work. — Higher Plane: the German should not abase himself before the Frenchman.


Dahms chooses to remain in Italy in view of the "moral and physical devastation" that he hears reported from Germany. — He is committed to Schust & Loeffler for a Haydn biography. He reports on a review of his book "Offenbarung."


Violin points out that Universal Edition is advertising Schoenberg's Harmonielehre but not Schenker's.


Amplifying a thought expressed in a recent letter, Schenker speaks of a plan to silence the throng that worships Schoenberg and the moderns, but money for it is lacking.

OJ 10/1, [73] **Typewritten letter from Walter and Margarete Dahms to Schenker, dated December 27, 1922** [http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/correspondence/OJ-10-1_73.html]

Dahms has been trying to improve his publishers' financial terms. — He is in low-grade accommodation; housing in the "German colonies" is available only
to officials. — Reports on the concert season in Rome. — Die Musik would not accept an article from him on Schenker's teachings. — Comments on a recent article by Paul Bekker, on Emil Hertzka's "sabotaging" of Schenker, and Furtwängler's lack of whole-hearted support. — Is still working on his latest book, for which he is arranging a de luxe edition by subscription. — Reports unfavorably on an incident in which Otto Klemperer played the Italian fascist hymn.

Violin thanks Schenker for Tonwille 3 and reports on growing social unrest and anti-French feeling in Germany.

Violin reports on a brief trip to Berlin for respite from the strain of teaching and his son's illness. He is reading the second volume of Schenker's Counterpoint, but asks him for clarification of a matter concerning second-species counterpoint in two voices, discussed in volume 1.

Having settled into country life in the Tyrol, Schenker returns to his work, in particular to the ongoing battles with Hertzka over the publication of Der Tonwille. He asks Violin’s opinion about a subscription plan for a periodical that would appear four times a year (instead of the current two), and hopes that his friend might spare a few days to visit him in Galtür.

Violin has met an industrialist by the name of Max Temming who would be willing to help make Schenker's work more widely accessible. Violin will probably not visit the Schenkers in Galtür this summer, as prices have gone up in Germany.

Schenker describes his efforts to make Der Tonwille more widely read, through its distribution by his pupils and its display in music shop windows. He needs more help from pupils and friends with the dissemination of his work, but complains that Hans Weisse has let him down on more than one occasion by not writing about his work. Finally, he asks Violin’s advice about whether he should accept an invitation to speak at a conference in Leipzig, or whether he should simply stay at home and continue to write.

OJ 10/1, [79] Handwritten letter from Dahms to Schenker, dated November 1, 1923
Dahms has devoted a chapter of his Musik des Südens to "genius" in which he asserts its absoluteness and the gulf between genius and mediocrity. — He concurs with Hertzka's judgement of Furtwängler as a "coward"; In his quest for success, the latter has compromised his belief in genius by pandering to Schoenberg. The Korngolds are coming to Rome in August.

OJ 10/1, [87] Handwritten letter from Dahms to Schenker, dated February 26, 1925
Dahms reports on the Vrieslanders’ Italian travels; compares Hertzka
unfavorably to Drei Masken Verlag; He plans to sue Hertzka; comments on Bekker and Korngold.

In this wide-ranging letter, Schenker commiserates with Violin about the high cost of living, and his inability to raise his fees to keep up with it (in particular, he feels unable to ask the wealthy Hoboken to pay more than his other pupils). He reports on sales of a medallion bearing his image, and the imminent arrival of a mezzotint of his portrait, made by Viktor Hammer, of which his brother Moses Schenker has bought the original drawing. Vrieslander will write an essay about his work in Die Musik, accompanied by the portrait, and things are now going well with the corrections to Meisterwerk 1 and the writing of Meisterwerk 2.

OJ 10/1, [91] Handwritten letter from Dahms to Schenker, dated December 1, 1925
The [Hammer] mezzotint has arrived; Dahms expresses a reservation about it. — He has been writing for Die Musik. — He succeeded in getting compensation from UE.

OJ 5/17, [1, vsn 1] Handwritten draft letter from Schenker to Hindemith, undated [November 3, 1926]
In response to Hindemith's letter of October 25, 1926, Schenker's 15-page first draft states his preference for a meeting with Hindemith in Vienna. Schenker thinks differently from Hindemith: the notion of a "good musician" is a delusion; artistic property is comparable with material property; the music of today is quite different from that of the past, the rules of the masterworks do not govern it, hence it is not art at all. Schenker reserves the right to speak his own mind.

OJ 5/7a, [10] (formerly vC 10) Handwritten letter from Schenker to Cube, dated June 1, 1927
Schenker congratulates Cube on appointment to professorship; reports that Oppel has been appointed to a professorship at the Leipzig Conservatory, and on the spread of Schenker's theory elsewhere; looks forward to visit from Cube.

DLA 69.930/15 Handwritten letter from Schenker to Halm, dated July 11, 1927
Thanking Halm for his Beethoven book, he believes that their misunderstandings could be removed and hopes Der freie Satz will help bring that about; gives order of publication for Meisterwerk II and Der freie Satz, and compares his "Das Organische der Fuge" with the work of others on Bach. — Schenker took no part in the Vienna Beethoven festival. — Describes his correspondence with Hindemith.

OJ 6/7, [35] Handwritten letter from Schenker to Violin, dated August 5, 1927
In a wide-ranging letter, Schenker underscores the importance of his friend's taking a holiday, and tries to persuade him to visit him in Galtür. There he was visited by Reinhard Oppel, who has been appointed to a theory post at the Leipzig Conservatory, where he will teach from Schenker's texts. He comments at length on the decline of society, as exemplified by the July Revolt. The second Meisterwerk volume has gone to the bookbinders; until it is published, he will be working on Der freier Satz.

Hoboken reports on meeting with Furtwängler regarding the Photogrammarchiv, and expresses the hope that it will be possible to interest Furtwängler in performance according to the sources in the Archive; he encloses the final version of the "Aufruf" for the Archive, and discusses negotiations with the Austrian National Library and Ministry of Education. — Comments on Oppel's plan to teach in Leipzig. — Agrees to Schenker's lesson plan and fee for 1927/28. — Describes his travel plans, which include meetings with Louis Koch in Frankfurt, Ludwig Schiedermair in Bonn, contact with John Petrie Dunn in England, C. S. Terry in Scotland, and Maurice Cauchie in Paris, and photographing [of sources] at the [Paris] Conservatory.

OJ 15/16, [58] Handwritten letter from Weisse to Schenker, dated October 27, 1927

Weisse congratulates Schenker on the publication of the second Meisterwerk Yearbook, of which has expresses mainly admiration. But he is unhappy with Schenker's dismissal of the fugue from Reger's Variations and Fugue on a theme of Bach, and with his reading of the Urlinie in Schubert's Waltz Op. 9 (D. 365), No. 5, and Beethoven's Sonata Op. 10, No. 2.

OJ 89/1, [8] Handwritten letter from Schenker to van Hoboken, dated December 17, 1927

Reply from Dr. Richtera has arrived, and Schenker encloses it; Otto Erich Deutsch is invited to give a lecture about the damages. — Hoboken has had a letter from Alban Berg that may be intentionally ironic; Schenker reflects on the spirit of the Photogrammarchiv.

OJ 6/7, [44] Handwritten letter from Schenker to Violin, dated November 24, 1929

After reply to some of the more personal points in Violin's previous letter, Schenker welcomes his friend's efforts to look for a publisher for the Eroica Symphony monograph, noting that, in spite of the difficulties that Hertzka has caused him, his books are still in print and his status as a theorist has been acknowledged by the fact that the universities of Heidelberg and Leipzig have expressed an interest in appointing him. A recent article in the Deutsche Tonkünstler-Zeitung will give Violin further ammunition when approaching a publisher. That same issue also contains an article by Schoenberg touching on various canonic works (Bach, Prelude in C sharp minor for the Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1; Beethoven, Seventh Symphony, finale; Mozart, slow introduction to the "Dissonant" Quartet). He feels that it is beneath his dignity to make a formal reply; but to illustrate what he means, and why he is contemptuous of Schoenberg, he provides several voice-leading graphs and other music examples concerning these works.

OJ 89/3, [A] Handwritten letter from Schenker to Hoboken, undated [between November 14, 1928 and January 1, 1929]

Schenker asks Hoboken to send a copy of a Schubert minuet to Munich, and draws his attention to a Landshoff article and notice about the Andreas Bach book.

OJ 14/45, [81] Handwritten letter from Violin to Schenker, dated December 19, 1929

Violin has two possible publishers for the "Eroica" monograph. One of these he names as Rather in Leipzig, which has recently bought up Simrock. The other,
Breitkopf & Härtel, has been suggested by Furtwängler, who believes that the proposal would be supported by Karl Straube. Violin also considers the possibility replying to a recent article by Schoenberg.

OJ 5/7a, [28] (formerly vC 28) Handwritten letter from Schenker to Cube, dated January 12, 1930

Acknowledges OJ 9/34, [20], and gives detailed critique of Cube's analysis of the C major Prelude from WTC I, including graphs; advises on additional reading and Cube's plans to publish the analysis.

OJ 5/11, [1a] First draft of a handwritten letter from Schenker to Furtwängler, in Jeanette Schenker's hand, dated November 11#16, 1931

OJ 9/34, [33] Handwritten letter from Cube to Schenker, dated July 2, 1932

Cube outlines, with music examples and graphs, a theory of tonal system and modal mixture based on "the series of 5ths," "the closed-up circle of 5ths," and "differentiation of the resultant intervals in a diatonic projection" as a scale. He asks for Schenker's reaction.

OJ 11/54, [40] Typewritten letter from Hoboken to Schenker, dated July 29, 1932

Hoboken comments on some contemporary music; — he comments adversely on the new edition by Edouard Ganche of Chopin's works; — he may visit the Schenkers and bring Eva Boy with him.

OJ 15/16, [91] Handwritten letter from Hans Weisse to Schenker, dated March 30, 1933

In this long letter, Weisse expresses his bitter regret about Otto Vrieslander's reaction to his criticism of a recently published collection of his (Vrieslander's) songs, and to Schenker's exaggerated claims of their worth. Weisse defends his critical stance on the grounds that objective discussions are the only worthwhile ones, and that he took the trouble to write about the songs in a 14-page letter to Vrieslander only for the sake of art (in the Schenkerian sense) and feels hurt both by Vrieslander's personal reaction to Weisse's criticism and by Schenker's defence of the older pupil. — In the final paragraph, he inquires again about gaining permission to make multiple copies of Schenker's foreground graph of the "Eroica" Symphony.

OJ 9/34, [38] Handwritten letter from Cube to Schenker, dated September 7, 1933

Cube reports on his poor health and straitened circumstances, teaching at two conservatories and private pupils; he eagerly awaits Der freie Satz, and reports on his investigation of diatonic systems.

OJ 5/18, 33 Handwritten letter from Schenker to Jonas, dated December 21, 1933

Schenker sends article [by Citkowitz]. — In response to Jonas's quoting from a Jewish lexikon, he refers to the sermons by Cardinal Faulhaber, and writes of his pride in being Jewish but in having assimilated thoroughly enough to establish favorable relations with the Catholic church, antisemites, and the news media. — Implying a parallel between himself and Jesus, he offers his "monotheistic theory of music" as "a new message to the world from the Jews." — He has no copy of his Syrische Tänze; — writes of the work's history.

OJ 9/34, [42] Handwritten letter from Cube to Schenker, dated October 4,
1934 Quotes letter from Furtwängler in extenso touching on reasons for dismissal and articulating the importance of Schenker’s theory; Cube describes the impact of this letter on his Director. The names of Schenker, Halm, and Kurth were deleted from a recent text of his, and censorship has been imposed. Describes his own recent activities. Outlines his geometric theory of the diatonic components of tonality. Encloses photograph of his wife and son; describes hardships. Denies rumors that he has cheated Moriz Violin, and refers to the resulting backlash on him: Violin has a "complex", feels downtrodden by everyone.

OJ 12/6, [39] Typewritten letter (carbon copy) from Jonas to Schenker, dated November 28, 1934 Jonas has agreed to let his publisher proceed with a lawsuit against Willi Reich; he has written up the documentary evidence of the case and asks Schenker to circulate it among his circle. — He reports his activities in Berlin. — He reports his dispute with the Jüdischer Verlag.


Diaries

Diary entry by Schenker for 5 February 1907
Diary entry by Schenker for 8 February 1907
Diary entry by Schenker for 22 May 1907
Diary entry by Schenker for 26 May 1907
Diary entry by Schenker for 27 May 1907
Diary entry by Schenker for 15 January 1912
Diary entry by Schenker for 22 September 1912
Diary entry by Schenker for 29 September 1912
Diary entry by Schenker for 19 October 1912
Diary entry by Schenker for 28 October 1912
Diary entry by Schenker for 4 November 1912
Diary entry by Schenker for 7 November 1912
Other material