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# “My Dear Hagerl”: Self-Representation in Schoenberg’s String Quartet No. 2

BRYAN R. SIMMS

In a candid moment in 1912, Arnold Schoenberg let it be known that his music was purely a translation of his own being. “For me form is not the goal nor even one of the goals of an artistic work,” he confided to his student Egon Wellesz. “My music is solely the representation of myself.”<sup>1</sup> What could Schoenberg have meant by this? On one level his remark echoes the thinking of his nineteenth-century predecessors, among whom a composer’s life was often a fertile subject for his music. Gustav Mahler had spoken in this vein to Natalie Bauer-Lechner: “My two symphonies {Nos. 1 and 2},” he said, “contain the inner aspect of my whole life. . . . To understand these works properly would be to see my life transparently revealed in them.”<sup>2</sup> But Schoenberg never wished his life to be revealed in his music. “I don’t want

to be understood,” he told Alma Mahler in 1910 concerning the text for his opera *Die glückliche Hand*. “I want to express myself, but I hope to be misunderstood. It would be terrible if someone could see through me.”<sup>3</sup>

These remarks suggest that Schoenberg aimed to represent himself in his music in a conscious but cryptic or abstract manner. In this article I shall explore the process by which the composer created just such a work of self-representation in his String Quartet No. 2. A reassessment of the Quartet’s compositional documents and chronology will show that Schoenberg, in an effort to make the work acceptable to the public, at first intended it to be an absolute composition close to the Classical norm. But midway through its period of creation this conception was discarded in favor of a more original formative model that grew from

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<sup>1</sup>“Pour moi, la forme n’est pas le but, ou l’un des buts du travail artistique. . . . Ma musique n’est que la représentation {sic} de moi-même” (Egon Wellesz, “Schönberg et la jeune école viennoise,” *Revue musicale S. I. M.* 8/3 [1912], 25–26).

<sup>2</sup>Natalie Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, ed. Peter Franklin, trans. Dika Newlin (London: Faber Music, 1980), p. 30.

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<sup>3</sup>“Denn ich will nicht verstanden werden. Ich will mich ausdrücken—aber ich hoffe, man wird mich missverstehen. Mir wäre es furchtbar, wenn man mich durchschauen könnte” (letter from Arnold Schoenberg to Alma Mahler, 7 October 1910, transcribed in *Arnold Schoenberg: Paintings and Drawings*, ed. Thomas Zaunschirm [Klagenfurt: Ritter, 1991], p. 436).

an intense process of self-reflection. The content of hitherto unpublished letters from his wife written during these months suggests that this transformation was driven by an objectification of his private world—then filled with personal dramas, ungovernable emotions, and thwarted professional aspirations.

During his early atonal period, from about 1908 to 1912, Schoenberg experimented with several methods of musical self-reflection. One of the most distinctive, used mainly in 1909 and 1910, was the method of composing in a stream of consciousness. By a spontaneous recording of musical ideas, Schoenberg believed that he could sweep the emotions from his deeper mind directly into a music in which the outer person would remain unseen and unseeable. He described the method in considerable detail in correspondence with Ferruccio Busoni from the summer of 1909. In a letter written on 24 August, he told Busoni that in his recent music he intended "to place nothing inhibiting in the stream of my unconscious sensations."<sup>4</sup> The music that resulted, he wrote, would be brief, unstable in its emotionality, and devoid of forms that were the product of harmony or motivic work.

But even earlier, as he wrote his Second String Quartet and *Hanging Gardens* songs, op. 15, in 1908, the composer's consciousness of self had begun to unsettle his musical language and to alter his outlook on form. The Quartet has long been recognized for its consequence in Schoenberg's development.<sup>5</sup> The composer him-

self often underscored its influence on his future direction: "This quartet played a great role in my career," he remarked.<sup>6</sup>

The Second String Quartet . . . marks the transition to my second period. In this period I renounced a tonal centre—a procedure incorrectly called "atonality." In the first and second movements there are many sections in which the individual parts proceed regardless of whether or not their meeting results in codified harmonies. Still, here, and also in the third and fourth movements, the key is present distinctly at all the main dividing-points of the formal organization. Yet the overwhelming multitude of dissonances cannot be counterbalanced any longer by occasional returns to such tonal triads as represent a key. It seemed inadequate to force a movement into the Procrustean bed of a tonality without supporting it by harmonic progressions that pertain to it. This dilemma was my concern, and it should have occupied the minds of all my contemporaries also. That I was the first to venture the decisive step will not be considered universally a merit—a fact I regret but have to ignore.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to its position in Schoenberg's personal evolution, the work is also an important historical document for all of twentieth-century music, since it marks the beginning of the fragmentation of a relatively unified German modernist style—represented at the turn of the century by the music of Richard Strauss, Hugo Wolf, Max Reger, Gustav Mahler, in addition to Schoenberg himself—and the blazing of a neomodernist path by which composers conceived of a new tonal order to distance their

<sup>4</sup>Ferruccio Busoni: *Selected Letters*, trans. and ed. Antony Beaumont (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 396.

<sup>5</sup>The structure of the work is analyzed in detail in Catherine Dale, *Tonality and Structure in Schoenberg's Second String Quartet, Op. 10*, Outstanding Dissertations in Music from British Universities (New York: Garland, 1993); Walter Frisch, *The Early Works of Arnold Schoenberg, 1893–1908* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 258–72; and Manfred Pfisterer, *Studien zur Kompositionstechnik in den frühen atonalen Werken von Arnold Schönberg*, Tübinger Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft, 5 (Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler, 1978). Formal studies of parts of the work are found in Catherine Dale, "Schoenberg's Concept of Variation Form: A Paradigmatic Analysis of *Litanei* from the Second String Quartet, Op. 10," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 118 (1993), 94–120; Werner Breig, "Schönbergs 'Litanei,'" in *Analysen: Beiträge zu einer Problemgeschichte des Komponierens: Festschrift für Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht zum 65.*

*Geburtstag*, ed. Werner Breig, Reinhold Brinkmann, and Elmar Budde (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1984), pp. 361–76; and Tobias Bleek, "Entrückung: Text und musikalische Struktur im Schlußsatz von Arnold Schönbergs II. Streichquartett," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 57 (2000), 362–88. Also see the analysis produced by Schoenberg's students, "Arnold Schönbergs Fis-Moll-Quartett: Eine technische Analyse" (1909), rpt. with a translation by Mark DeVoto in *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 16 (1993), 293–322.

<sup>6</sup>Arnold Schoenberg, "Notes on the Four String Quartets" (ca. 1936) in *Schoenberg, Webern, Berg: The String Quartets; A Documentary Study*, ed. Ursula von Rauchhaupt, trans. Eugene Hartzell (Hamburg: Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft, 1971), pp. 35–64, at p. 42.

<sup>7</sup>"My Evolution" (1949), in Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), p. 86.

music from that of their immediate forebears and older contemporaries.

Schoenberg's own attempt to explain his leading role in this reformulation of the modernist agenda took several different directions, suggesting a considerable uncertainty. When he first began to write about the music of his "second period," he described it as the embodiment of a natural reformatory process, itself the result of "an inner compulsion." Later, he pointed to the expressive necessities inspired by the poetry of Stefan George, later still to the realization in his music of an Apollonian ideal: "I was driven onward by the need for *brevity, precision, definition, and clarity*," he wrote in 1937.<sup>8</sup>

Well after the composer's death in 1951, as information became known concerning the emotional crises by which Schoenberg was beset in 1907 and 1908, a new factor entered into the critical assessment of his reformulation of modernism—one that Schoenberg himself had carefully avoided in any of his own explanations of atonality. Writers close to the composer, including Willi Reich and Dika Newlin, intimated that nonmusical, personal considerations were operative in Schoenberg's change of style at the time of the Second String Quartet. Reich, for example, spoke of a secret program in the work that influenced its vocal idiom:

The only other thing that should be hinted at here is a "secret programme"; this the composer would not make public, but there are various pointers to it. The texts used by Schoenberg as the basis of the last two movements (poems by Stefan George, from *Der Siebente Ring*, which had appeared in 1907), and, above all, the musical expressiveness given to the soprano line, show that the composer was going through a severe psychic crisis. . . . There is a further hint of the "secret programme" in the quotation from the Viennese street song *O du Lieber Augustin, alles ist hin!*, in the trio of the scherzo (second movement). Dika Newlin, one of Schoenberg's American pupils, noted down a remark made to her by Schoenberg while discussing this passage: he said

that *Alles ist hin* was not to be taken symbolically, but in the true sense.<sup>9</sup>

Such allusions to a programmatic dimension in the Quartet were better understood after 1967, when Jan Meyerowitz, relying on information from Schoenberg's son-in-law, Felix Greißle, told of a temporary breakup of the composer's marriage, which occurred as the work was being written: "Frau Mathilde left her husband and two children (a daughter and son) and lived for a short while with the painter {Richard} Gerstl," Meyerowitz wrote, "but she later returned to Schoenberg, whereupon Gerstl committed suicide in a gruesome way."<sup>10</sup> This revelation threw a new light on Schoenberg's progress toward atonality, suggesting that it stemmed in part from the composer's self-conscious reaction to personal crisis. The "true sense" mentioned by Schoenberg to Dika Newlin in regard to the quotation of "*Alles ist hin!*" (It's all over!) was thus explained as the composer's artistic response to feelings of rejection and failure, both as a man and artist. According to this theory, the composer's personal anguish drove him toward a potentially nihilistic musical language that could otherwise exist only in a distant future time.

All of these hypotheses concerning the origins of atonality—evolution, necessity, expression, personal crisis, and self-conscious defiance—come into focus in the conception and composition of Schoenberg's Second String Quartet. The stylistic foundations for the work were laid somewhat before its first sketches were set down. In January and February 1907—about a month before Schoenberg drafted the earliest of its themes—the composer had reached a crucial juncture in his career. He organized a series of concerts in Vienna at this time by which a cross-section of his musical *œuvre* would first be made known to mainstream Viennese concert audiences. His choice of works appears to have been methodically

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 34–35.

<sup>10</sup>"Frau Mathilde verließ ihren Mann und die beiden Kinder (Tochter und Sohn) und lebte für kurze Zeit mit dem Maler Gerstl zusammen, kehrte jedoch später zu Schönberg zurück, worauf Gerstl auf eine grausige Art Selbstmord verübte" (Jan Meyerowitz, *Arnold Schönberg, Köpfe des XX. Jahrhunderts*, 47 [Berlin: Colloquium, 1967], p. 16).

<sup>8</sup>Arnold Schoenberg, quoted in Willi Reich, *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, trans. Leo Black (New York: Praeger, 1971), pp. 49 (untitled program notes [1910]), 241.

planned to show an evolution from an accepted modernist style to a more distinctive and personalized language whose pitch organization, at the far reaches of traditional tonality, was unlike that of any of his major contemporaries. The first of three concerts, on 26 January, was sponsored by the Ansorge-Verein at the Ehrbar Hall, an evening devoted to Schoenberg's early songs, performed by singers from the Court Opera and accompanied at the piano by Alexander Zemlinsky. Although the exact program has apparently not survived, reviews suggest that the works were drawn from Schoenberg's ops. 2, 3, and 6—collections of Lieder composed between 1899 and 1905 in styles that would have been reasonably familiar to listeners already acquainted with songs by Wolf or Mahler. Then on 5 February the Quartett Rosé concluded its yearly subscription series at the Bösendorfer Hall with the premiere of Schoenberg's String Quartet No. 1 in D Minor, op. 7, which was paired with Schubert's Quintet in C Major, D. 956. Completed in 1905, the First Quartet is of considerable length, cast in a cyclic one-movement form, and marked by an intricate part writing, unstable rhythm and meter, and recondite thematic development. It represented Schoenberg's musical language in a more advanced stage than in the songs, although aspects of the work would not have been entirely unfamiliar in comparison to chamber music by Brahms or Reger.

The climax of the Schoenberg cycle of 1907 came at the Musikverein only three days later when Arnold Rosé led the "Wind Chamber Music Society of the Court Opera" in the premiere of Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony, op. 9, which was heard together with Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari's *Sinfonia da camera*, op. 8, and Vincent D'Indy's *Chansons et danses*, op. 50. Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony had been completed less than six months before the concert, and it represented the final stage in the evolution that Schoenberg apparently wished to reveal. It has much in common with the First Quartet—including its one-movement form, highly complex texture, unsettled and prose-like rhythms, and intense thematic unity. But it moves beyond the idiom of the earlier work in the heterogeneity of its sound world, in a contrapuntal texture that is freer from

functional harmony, and in a more compact and unorthodox form.

In his later writings, Schoenberg pointed to the Chamber Symphony as a pivotal moment in his evolution. Here he believed that he had at last found his own voice as a composer, one that was original but still rooted in the German modern idiom of the late Romantic period and that could eventually be understood by the public. In a lecture given in 1937, he looked back wistfully at this time in his career, underscoring the special importance of the Chamber Symphony as the work that he expected to catapult him to fame:

After having finished the composition of the *Kammersymphonie* it was not only the expectation of success which filled me with joy. It was another and a more important matter. I believed I had now found my own personal style of composing and that all problems which had previously troubled a young composer had been solved and that a way had been shown out of the perplexities in which we young composers had been involved through the harmonic, formal, orchestral and emotional innovations of Richard Wagner. I believed I had found ways of building and carrying out understandable, characteristic, original, and expressive themes and melodies, in spite of the enriched harmony which we had inherited from Wagner. It was as lovely a dream as it was a disappointing illusion.<sup>11</sup>

Schoenberg's remarks leave the impression that in 1907 he did not foresee the relentless advances in style that later came to characterize his music. He instead seemed content with the degree of originality represented by the Chamber Symphony and was ready to continue mining its vein in the future. But this outlook and Schoenberg's keen desire for a popular success must have made the scandals that greeted his concerts in early 1907 especially wounding. The *Liederabend* was reasonably successful. "[He is] the boldest and, after Mahler, the most ingenious and temperamental figure in the Viennese musical Secession," reported Theodor Helm in the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* and *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* on 7 February. "Several songs had to be repeated, and at the end

<sup>11</sup>Arnold Schoenberg, "How One Becomes Lonely," in *Style and Idea*, p. 49.



the composer was stormily called to the stage." But the First Quartet found little comprehension outside of Schoenberg's enthusiastic circle, and its performance was marred by demonstrations in the audience that could only have distracted attention from the work itself. "Not a measure in this strange Secessionistic music resembles anything already heard of," remarked Julius Korngold in the *Neue freie Presse* on 10 February. Heinrich Schenker attended the concert expressly on Schoenberg's invitation, and afterward he reflected in his diary on the work, reaching a conclusion about it that must have been shared by most listeners outside of Schoenberg's own circle:

Quartet, D minor, by Schoenberg played by Rosé. A singular, extended desecration. If there are criminals in the world of art, this composer—whether by birth or by his own making—would have to be counted among them. Without feeling for tonality, motive, proportion—going on simply threadbare, without any technique and, at the same time, with a great and constant pretension.<sup>12</sup>

The performance of the Chamber Symphony three days later—when Schoenberg hoped to show the culmination of his development—was a complete fiasco. "Never before or after has a concert in Vienna ended in such tumult," remarked Egon Wellesz, who was in attendance at the event.

With equal passion, Schoenberg's supporters applauded and his opponents whistled. . . . Even in the

<sup>12</sup>"Des kühnsten, nach Mahler geistreichsten und temperamentvollsten . . . unter den Wiener musikalischen Sezessionisten. . . . Einige Lieder mussten wiederholt werden, und zuletzt wurde der Komponist stürmisch gerufen" (Theodor Helm, *Musikalisches Wochenblatt/Neue Zeitschrift für Music*, 7 February 1907, p. 151): "Kein Takt in dieser merkwürdigen, sezessionistischen Music klingt an Gehörtes an" (Julius Korngold, *Neue freie Press*, 10 Feb. 1907 [*Morgenblatt*], p. 13). Quartett d<sup>m</sup> v. Schönberg bei Rosé. Ein einziger langgezogener Frevel! Wenn es Verbrecher auch in der Welt der Kunst gäbe, man müßte zu ihnen auch den Autor rechnen als einen geborenen oder vielleicht erst gewordenen. Ohne Gefühl für Tonart, Motiv, Maß, nur so einfach lumpig vor sich hin, ohne jegliche Technik, u. dennoch zugleich eine größte, nicht dagewesene immerzu simulierend" (from Hellmut Federhofer, *Heinrich Schenkers Verhältnis zu Arnold Schönberg*, Mitteilungen der Kommission für Musikforschung, 33 [Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1982], p. 380).

middle of the one-movement work, people began noisily to leave the hall; later, some of the audience began to bang their chair seats up and down, to slam the doors of the hall, and to whistle unceasingly on their door keys. Some of the very young students of Heinrich Schenker—that great opponent of all music after Brahms—were leaders of the whistling chorus. During the final minutes of the performance there arose such an uproar that the noise entirely drowned out the music.<sup>13</sup>

The dejection that Schoenberg must have felt at this moment could only have been increased by the reaction of acquaintances whom he admired. Guido Adler told Alma Mahler that he had literally wept after the concert from his concern over the future of music.<sup>14</sup> Gustav Mahler attended all three of the concerts in early 1907 and had publicly accorded Schoenberg an extraordinary measure of support.<sup>15</sup> But privately he was skeptical. "We spent the rest of the evening discussing the Schoenberg question," wrote Alma Mahler after the concert on 8 February. "'I don't understand his music,' {Mahler} said, 'but he's young and perhaps he's right. I am old and I dare say my ear is not sensitive enough'."<sup>16</sup> Mahler apparently brought his reservations to Schoenberg's attention at this time. "When I showed the First String Quartet to Gustav Mahler, the great Austrian composer and conductor, at that time head of the Imperial Opera in Vienna, he said: 'I have conducted the most difficult scores of Wagner,

<sup>13</sup>"Weder früher noch später hat in Wien eine Aufführung in einem derartigen Tumult geendet. Mit gleicher Leidenschaft applaudierten die Anhänger Schönbergs und pffiften die Gegner. . . . Schon in der Mitte des einsätzigen Werkes begannen Leute lärmend den Saal zu verlassen; später aber fing ein Teil des Publikums an, die Sessel auf- und niederzuklappen, die Saaltüren zuzuschlagen und auf Schlüsseln unaufhörlich zu pfeifen. Einige sehr junge Schüler von Heinrich Schenker, dem großen Gegner aller nachbrahms'schen Musik, taten sich im Pfeifkonzert besonders hervor. Während der letzten Minuten der Aufführung herrschte ein solcher Aufruhr, daß der Lärm die Musik übertönte" (Egon and Emmy Wellesz, *Egon Wellesz: Leben und Werk*, ed. Franz Endler [Vienna: Paul Zsolnay, 1981], p. 57).

<sup>14</sup>Alma Mahler, *Gustav Mahler: Memories and Letters*, ed. Donald Mitchell, trans. Basil Creighton (3d edn. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975), p. 112.

<sup>15</sup>See Henry-Louis de la Grange, *Gustav Mahler*, vol. 3: *Vienna: Triumph and Disillusion (1904–1907)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 607–16.

<sup>16</sup>Alma Mahler, *Gustav Mahler*, p. 112.

I have written complicated music myself in scores of up to thirty staves and more; yet here is a score of not more than four staves, and I am unable to read them'.<sup>17</sup> Despite such reactions, Schoenberg could always count on the support of his circle of students and admirers. One of them—the young painter Richard Gerstl—rushed to the composer after the concerts to assure him that he was now revealed as the world's greatest living artist.<sup>18</sup>

But what was Schoenberg to do in light of this uproar? We can judge from music he composed immediately following the three concerts that his reaction was accommodative rather than defiant. For a time he was plainly willing to compromise with the public—to back away from the most daunting aspects of the First Quartet and Chamber Symphony so that his music could find acceptance.<sup>19</sup> This attempt at rapprochement is seen most blatantly in the first composition that he began after the debacle of the three concerts—the chorus *Friede auf Erden*, op. 13—which was composed in late February and early March.<sup>20</sup> Here Schoenberg banished the complex polyphony and pervasive dissonance that characterize the Chamber Symphony, and he installed in their place an enriched and poignantly expressive harmony that he—or numerous other German modernists—might well have written several decades before. The harmonic progressions of *Friede auf Erden* remain reasonably close to the key of D minor and major, and the work has a clarity of design and immediacy of expression that are a far cry from the preceding instrumental works.

Schoenberg continued his search for a middle course when he began his Second Quartet, a work that Dika Newlin has aptly praised for its

"light and air."<sup>21</sup> But here he more narrowly focused his effort to achieve accessibility by looking specifically to the power of traditional musical form to facilitate comprehensibility of new music that was unfamiliar in its tonality. In place of an integrated one-movement plan with an overarching thematic unity—the strategy that he had used in the First Quartet and Chamber Symphony—the new work would rest on the Classical norm of separate, concise movements. It is evident from the earliest compositional materials for the work—found in the so-called Sketchbook III—that Schoenberg's original conception was for the first two movements, at least, to allude to familiar formal archetypes and for these movements to exhibit no outward sharing of themes.<sup>22</sup>

A classicizing of form for the purpose of comprehensibility marked an important moment in Schoenberg's thinking about musical structure and a new eagerness to promote the acceptance of his music, the ramifications of which would become fully apparent only in the outright return to Classical forms in the early twelve-tone works. Before the Second Quartet, Schoenberg had followed Wagner's dictum that musical forms should be part of the distinctive individuality of a composer, not commonly shared archetypes.<sup>23</sup> In Schoenberg's earlier music there is a relentless reinterpretation and loosening of traditional formal principles in favor of new ideas and free expressivity. But the concerts of 1907 forced him to reassess this attitude and to experiment with a mixed style in which Classical formal gestures could mingle with an advanced tonal language. In a note dated 1929, Schoenberg explained the thinking that had begun in 1907: "If comprehensibility is hindered on one side, it must be simplified on the other. In new music, chords and melodic intervals and their successions are often

<sup>17</sup>Schoenberg, "How One Becomes Lonely," p. 42.

<sup>18</sup>The anecdote was related by Gerstl's brother Alois. See Otto Breicha, *Gerstl und Schönberg: Eine Beziehung* (Salzburg: Verlag Galerie Welz, 1993), p. 14.

<sup>19</sup>In an undated "Testamentsentwurf" (ca. 1908), Schoenberg remarked on this wish for success: "Gerne hätte ich . . . auch—ich kann's nicht leugnen—den Ruhm dafür geerntet" ("I would have . . . also liked—I can't deny it—to have reaped fame"). Quoted in *Arnold Schönberg, 1874–1951: Lebensgeschichte in Begegnungen*, ed. Nuria Nono-Schoenberg (Klagenfurt: Ritter, 1992), p. 49.

<sup>20</sup>Jan Maegaard, *Studien zur Entwicklung des dodekaphonen Satzes bei Arnold Schönberg* (Copenhagen: Wilhelm Hansen, 1972), I, 54.

<sup>21</sup>Dika Newlin, *Bruckner, Mahler, Schoenberg* (rev. edn. New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), p. 234.

<sup>22</sup>All drafts and sketches for the Quartet are transcribed and analyzed by Christian Martin Schmidt in *Arnold Schönberg sämtliche Werke* (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne; Vienna: Universal Edition, 1986), part B, vol. 20, pp. 174–205.

<sup>23</sup>See Richard Wagner, "On Franz Liszt's Symphonic Poems" (1857), in *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, trans. William Ashton Ellis, vol. 3, *The Theatre* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1894), esp. pp. 242–43.

hard to comprehend. So, on the other side, a form must be selected that eases understanding by a familiar sequence of events."<sup>24</sup>

It was just this familiar sequence of events that was so noticeably absent in the Chamber Symphony. The overall form of this earlier work—one movement whose sections outline both a sonata form and a four-movement symphonic sequence—would have been reasonably familiar to listeners in 1907 from its use in several major nineteenth-century compositions and, more recently, in the *Sinfonia domestica* (1902–03) by Richard Strauss—not to mention in Schoenberg's own *Pelleas und Melisande* and First String Quartet. But in details of form, the Chamber Symphony is remote from any Classical prototype. The difficulties faced by its early listeners are amply illustrated in the first major part (to reh. no. 38), which corresponds to the exposition of a sonata-form movement and also to the first movement of a symphony. The sense of a prevailing key, especially at the beginning, is both dim and ambiguous: the tonic could be either E major or F major or minor, each of which is alluded to sporadically in harmonic progressions at structural junctures before the arrival of A major—the main secondary key—at reh. no. 21. The ambiguity of key leads to an impreciseness concerning themes. The listener is uncertain where the main themes are, where they begin and end, how they are shaped, and what pattern guides their introduction, expansion, and return. In his analysis of the work, Alban Berg counted fifteen themes within this one part alone, and none is presented using the Classical patterns of period or sentence.<sup>25</sup> For even the most astute and sym-

pathetic listener of 1907, the work must have seemed to lack a perceptible organization.

This was the obstacle to acceptance that Schoenberg apparently wished to remove from his new quartet, as it existed in his mind during the summer and fall of 1907. Between 9 March and 1 September, Schoenberg composed the first movement, as he simultaneously pushed forward on the first and second movements of the Second Chamber Symphony, a work whose fragments from this time exhibit the same classicizing of form as do those for the Quartet.<sup>26</sup> Far more plainly than in the Chamber Symphony, the music of the first movement of the new quartet alludes to a traditional sonata form. Schoenberg is especially cautious to begin the movement in a traditional way and only later—toward the middle of the movement—to bring his listener into a more complex environment. The music opens directly with the main theme (ex. 1), which is distinctly Classical in its presentation and devoid of the experimental features that had apparently baffled his audiences at the beginning of the Chamber Symphony. The theme is cast into a relatively simple period form, whose antecedent phrase (mm. 1–7) begins on the tonic harmony in F# minor and whose consequent phrase (mm. 8–12) ends on the dominant in this key. The theme presents its listener with a clear and simple texture and an easily retained melodiousness. A reasonably familiar sequence of events follows: another theme in the tonic key, again in period form, leads at m. 33 to a transition in which references to any stable key begin to evaporate. Subsidiary themes begin at m. 43, and these are ever more contrapuntal and fragmented in presentation and lacking in key. The movement from simple to complex is then reversed as the first of two recapitulations is reached at m. 146. This begins over an F-major triad, which clearly reminds the listener of the same chord near the end of the main theme (see ex. 1, m. 11). Tonal order

<sup>24</sup>“Wenn die Faßlichkeit auf einer Seite erschwert wird, muß sie auf der anderen vereinfacht werden. In der neuen Musik sind die Zusammenklänge und die Melodie-Intervalle und ihre Folgen oft schwer faßlich. Darum muß eine Form gewählt werden, welche auf der anderen Seite Erleichterung schafft, indem sie einen bekannten Ablauf herstellt.” The text of this note, titled “Die alten Formen in der neuen Musik,” is given in full in Christoph von Blumröder, “Schoenberg and the Concept of ‘New Music,’” *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 6 (1982), 101–02.

<sup>25</sup>Alban Berg, *Arnold Schoenberg Chamber Symphony Op. 9: Thematic Analysis*, trans. Mark DeVoto, *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 16 (1993), 236–68. There is little unanimity concerning the form of the Chamber Symphony in the analytic literature. Most writers, including

Catherine Dale in her recent *Schoenberg's Chamber Symphonies: The Crystallization and Rediscovery of a Style* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), have followed Berg's overview. Walter Frisch (*The Early Works of Arnold Schoenberg*, pp. 220–47) finds two expositions in the opening part.

<sup>26</sup>Concerning this aspect of the work, see Frisch, *The Early Works of Arnold Schoenberg*, pp. 251–58.



Mäßig (♩ = ca 100)  
etwas langsamer anfangen

Vln. I  
Vln. II  
Vla.  
Vc.

*p* *pp* *p* *pp*

etwas rascher (♩ = 120–126)

*f* *ff* *p*

rit. Hauptzeitmaß

Example 1: Arnold Schoenberg, String Quartet No. 2, op. 10, movt. I, mm. 1–12.

and familiarity are fully reestablished with the second recapitulation in m. 159, in the tonic F# minor.

Immediately following the completion of the first movement, Schoenberg began to draft the scherzo-like second movement of the Quartet. As in the first movement, the second would have a more familiar overall design than did the scherzo of the Chamber Symphony. Schoenberg described the Classical scherzo movement in his *Fundamentals of Musical Composition* as a large ternary form—scherzo/trio/scherzo reprise—in which each of these sections is itself constructed as a smaller ternary form.<sup>27</sup> The scherzo or trio section, he wrote, begins with an exposition of themes over relatively stable harmonies, and it is followed by a contrasting middle part that is normally developmental and unstable in harmony. The section is then rounded out by a varied reprise, to which extensions, episodes, and codettas can be added.

<sup>27</sup>Arnold Schoenberg, *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, ed. Gerald Strang and Leonard Stein (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967), pp. 150–66.

The scherzo of the Chamber Symphony, extending from reh. no. 38 to 60, does not closely conform to this Classical design. As Alban Berg was careful to note in his analysis of the work, there is no trio, only a single scherzo made from two themes. The second of these, which characterizes the contrasting middle part beginning at reh. no. 46, develops and transforms an accompanying idea from the first part. The reprise at reh. no. 54 is highly unorthodox as it presents both themes simultaneously.

In the Quartet, the Classical scherzo design is plainly evident, at least in the large dimension. The movement begins with a scherzo, a strongly contrasting trio enters at m. 98, and the scherzo returns at m. 193. The smaller ternary form is also clearly present in the trio section, which begins with a melodic period, continues at m. 123 with a development of that material, and ends with a varied reprise from 151. But Schoenberg was apparently uncertain about how to apply the Classical model in the opening scherzo section. The sketchbook strikingly reveals a progress on this part that was hesitant and filled with second thoughts, quite unlike Schoenberg's sure and unimpeded work

on the first movement.<sup>28</sup> The composer ultimately arrived at a scherzo section in which the Classical model is only dimly seen. In its final version, this opening part begins with an introductory roll call of themes in which three contrasting melodic fragments are presented. Beginning at m. 20 these ideas return one after the other, stated as full-blown themes with developments, although the passage is expository in its repeated statements of the tonic D-minor triad. A development of the first theme is begun at m. 80, but this immediately gives way at m. 85 to an equally abbreviated reprise of the theme, whereupon the scherzo ends.

Schoenberg's initial work on the second movement—using pp. 93–95 of the sketchbook—dealt with this highly complex opening scherzo, but before finalizing his ideas or moving on to the trio, he turned to another movement, as though trying to regain the sure hand that he had wielded in the first movement. On p. 96 he drafted sixteen measures of music presumably for the third movement, although this sketch has no tempo indication and was subsequently dropped from the final version. The fragment, which has a key signature of six flats although no definite tonal center, is again thematically distinct from the earlier two movements.<sup>29</sup>

On the next few pages of the sketchbook, Schoenberg made additional revisions in the opening scherzo, whereupon he put the entire work aside, as though admitting that a revival of Classical forms could not sustain him to the end of a large instrumental composition and that any calculating of his style as a composer was counterproductive. Evidently unprepared to resolve the conflict in his music between free self-expression and popular acceptability, Schoenberg abandoned the Quartet, leaving its future uncertain.

At this point Schoenberg turned his creative energies to the writing of songs, in which a spontaneous emotionality could produce mu-

sic that had already experienced a measure of success. The songs that he composed in late 1907 and 1908 use texts that ever more intimately portray his inner world. "Ich darf nicht dankend," op. 14, no. 1, and the fragmentary "Der Jünger" from the winter of 1907–08 were apparently provoked by Mahler's departure in December from Vienna for New York, and these introduced Schoenberg to the great musical stimulation of poetry by Stefan George. In March and April 1908, he returned to George's writings, using verse from *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten* in the composition of at least five new songs. In the poems that he selected at this time, one topic persistently appears, a theme that almost certainly echoed Schoenberg's personal situation. This was the speaker's passionate search for acceptance and affection from a beloved individual. Although this topic is found throughout Schoenberg's songs, it is especially evident in the texts that he set to music in 1907 and the early months of 1908. The speaker of George's "Ich darf nicht dankend" pleads for a greater intimacy with the beloved. Karl Henckell's "In diesen Wintertagen"—paired with the George poem in Schoenberg's Two Songs, op. 14—describes an imaginary island on which "we devote ourselves day and night to holy love." This mood continues in the poems from George's *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten* that Schoenberg set to music in March and April of 1908. In these—"Da meine Lippen," "Saget mir," "Als Neuling," "Wenn ich heut'," "Angst und Hoffen," and the fragmentary "Friedensabend"—there is an optimistic and intense supplication for love:

... Erwähle mich zu denen die dir dienen  
Und schone mit erbarmender geduld  
Den der noch strauchelt auf so fremdem stege.

Wenn ich heut nicht deinen leib berühre  
Wird der faden meiner seele reissen  
Wie zu sehr gespannte sehne.

... Da schien es dass durch hohe gitterstäbe  
Der blick vor dem ich ohne lass gekniet  
Mich fragend suchte oder zeichen gäbe.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup>See Christian Martin Schmidt's penetrating analysis of these sketches in *Arnold Schönberg sämtliche Werke*, part B, vol. 20, pp. 177–92.

<sup>29</sup>The fragment is transcribed by Christian Martin Schmidt in *Arnold Schönberg sämtliche Werke*, part B, vol. 20, p. 201.

<sup>30</sup>Stefan George, *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*, in *Die Bücher der Hirten- und Preisgedichte, der Sagen und Sänge, und der hängenden Gärten* in *Gesamt-Ausgabe der*

(. . . Choose me to be among those who serve you  
and, with merciful patience, spare him  
who is still stumbling on so unfamiliar a path.

If I do not touch your body today,  
the thread of my soul will tear  
like a sinew stretched too far.

. . . It seemed that through the high grating  
the glance, before which I ceaselessly have knelt,  
sought me out questioningly or would give signs.)

As Schoenberg himself later admitted, the intensely personal tone of George's poems led him—with no calculation at all—into a new style in which functional harmonic relations among chords dwindled to the point that triadic conclusions and key signatures could be deleted.<sup>31</sup> But this line of compositional thought was soon to be interrupted and redirected by a new circumstance—one that proved to be more powerful in shaping Schoenberg's future objectives as a composer than the practical and formalistic questions with which he had earlier grappled. In the spring and summer of 1908, his marriage collapsed and he was cast into so turbulent an emotional crisis as to bring him, by his own admission, to the brink of suicide.<sup>32</sup> After the summer of 1908, nothing could remain as it had been before.

Little is known about Schoenberg's first wife, Mathilde, whom the composer married in October 1901. She was Zemlinsky's sister, and those who met her later describe her as warm although deeply withdrawn.<sup>33</sup> Her letters to

Schoenberg show her to be greatly devoted to their children—a girl (Gertrud) and boy (Georg), born in January 1902 and September 1906, respectively—but with no other special interests outside of the family. One avocation that she briefly shared with her husband was painting. Both of the Schoenbergs began to paint around 1906, at about the same time that they became acquainted with the young Viennese artist Richard Gerstl, who had offered to paint their portraits.<sup>34</sup> Gerstl quickly became a member of the composer's circle, and he acquired a studio in the Liechtensteinstraße No. 20, close by the Schoenbergs' residence at Nos. 68–70.<sup>35</sup> From 1906 to 1908 Gerstl repeatedly painted studies of Mathilde, and a love affair erupted between the artist and his model.<sup>36</sup>

Schoenberg was well aware of the liaison. His daughter told him that she had seen Gerstl kiss her mother, whereupon Schoenberg is said to have written to Gerstl to insist that they should not allow a woman to come between them.<sup>37</sup> The date of this occurrence is unknown, but it appears to have taken place approximately in May of 1908, at which time Schoenberg developed an intense distrust of his wife. Their deteriorating relationship is evident from the content of a hitherto unpublished group of letters (enumerated in Table 1) that Mathilde sent to her husband over a three-week period in June of that year. The correspondence sheds a glaring light on the composer's frame of mind as he was provoked into putting aside the *Hanging Garden* songs, returning to the Quartet, and abandoning at least temporarily his aspirations for a conventional popularity as a composer.

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*Werke, endgültige Fassung*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Georg Bondi, 1930), pp. 104, 107, 105.

<sup>31</sup>Schoenberg, "How One Becomes Lonely," pp. 49–50.

<sup>32</sup>In the Testamentsentwurf, evidently set down shortly after the Gerstl affair, Schoenberg wrote: "Nun ist aber doch nicht zu leugnen, daß ich über ihren [Mathilde's] Treubruch äußerst unglücklich bin. Ich habe geweint, habe mich wie ein Verzweifelter gebärdet, habe Entschlüsse gefaßt und wieder verworfen, habe Selbstmordideen gehabt und beinahe ausgeführt, habe mich von einer Tollheit in die andere gestürzt—mit einem Wort, ich bin ganz zerrissen" (But it cannot be denied that I was extremely unhappy over her deception. I cried, acted like one in despair, made up my mind then changed it, had ideas of suicide and almost carried them out, drifted from one madness to another—in a word, I was entirely torn apart). This excerpt is found in Nuria Nono-Schoenberg, *Arnold Schönberg*, p. 49.

<sup>33</sup>See the recollections of Oskar Kokoschka in Joan Allen Smith, *Schoenberg and His Circle: A Viennese Portrait* (New York: Schirmer, 1986), p. 179.

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<sup>34</sup>Reproduced in Klaus Albrecht Schröder, *Richard Gerstl, 1883–1908* (Vienna: Kunstforum der Bank Austria, 1993), nos. 9–10.

<sup>35</sup>Concerning Gerstl and his work, see Breicha, *Gerstl und Schönberg*; Breicha, *Richard Gerstl: Die Landschaften* (Salzburg: Verlag Galerie Welz, 1996); Breicha, *Richard Gerstl: Bilder zur Person* (Salzburg: Verlag Galerie Welz, 1991); Jane Kallir, *Richard Gerstl, Oskar Kokoschka* (New York: Galerie St. Etienne, 1992); and Klaus Schröder, *Richard Gerstl, 1883–1908*.

<sup>36</sup>The existing portraits of Mathilde Schoenberg are reproduced in Klaus Schröder, *Richard Gerstl*, nos. 37, 41, 43, 47, 48, and 55.

<sup>37</sup>The anecdote is based on conversations between Otto Breicha and Gerstl's brother Alois. See Breicha, *Gerstl und Schönberg*, p. 14.

Table 1  
Correspondence from Mathilde Schoenberg to Arnold Schoenberg from 1908

DATE	FORMAT	INCIPIIT FOLLOWING SALUTATION
1. {early June}	hL3	Mich freut es, dass es Dir gut geht und dass Du Dich gut unterhältst. Gestern haben wir {und} die Kinder Jause gehabt und nachher waren wir zuhause.
2. {9 June}	hC1	Hoffentlich bist Du gut angekommen, und ist alles in Ordnung? Hier regnet es vorderhand ganz schön weiter. Mir ist furchtbar bang, die Zeit vergeht gar nicht.
3. {10 June}	hL3	Deine Karte habe ich schon bekommen. — Heute war ich mit der Mutter zu Fuss in Gmunden. Wir haben uns am Weg einige Wohnungen in Wayer{?} angeschaut
4. {11 June}	hL4	Mir ist nach Deinem Brief noch viel ekelhafter, als mir vor. — Wir haben eine furchtbare Dummheit gemacht. Und dabei ist hier fort und fort schlechtes
5. {12 June}	hL4	Deine Briefe machen mir wirklich riesige Freude. Eigentlich aber zweifelst Du noch immer, dass ich Dich lieb habe. Warum? Mir ist's genau so wie Dir zu
6. {12 June}	hC1	Also heute schreibe ich auch das zweite Mal. Alles ist gesund und wir zählen natürlich die Stunden bis Du kommst. — Ich trinke Cacao und esse sehr viel.
7. {13 June}	hL4	Mir ist so leid, dass Du Dich so viel plagen musst. Wenn's doch nur schon ein Ende hätte. Weisst Du, mir macht viel Sorge woher Du das viele Geld, dass Dir
8. {14 June}	hL4	Heute beginnt also schon die zweite Woche von den dreien. Wird's ein Ende nehmen? Mir ist seit zwei Tagen nicht recht wohl. Ich hab' einen verdorbenen
9. {15 June}	hL4	Du beklagst Dich, ich schreibe Dir kurze Briefe, aber es geht nicht anders. Ich muss mich immer sehr eilen damit der Briefträger den Brief noch im Rückweg
10. {16 June}	hC1	Weshalb hast Du mir gestern nicht geschrieben? Ich finde, das müsste nicht sein. Es ist doch nichts vorgefallen? Ich begreife das gar nicht! Hier is alles in Ord-
11. {16 June}	hL4	Gott sei Dank, dass ich Brief von Dir habe. Ich war schon sehr beunruhigt. — Mit dem Morgen ist mir wieder besser. Ich konnte allerdings 3 Tage nur sehr
12. {17 June}	hL4	Ich freue mich riesig, dass Du die Gärtnerarbeit fertig hast. Fang nicht gleich wieder was Neues an, ruhe Dich erst ein wenig aus. Mir kommt die Zeit die Du
13. {18 June}	hL3	Ich kann heute den Briefträger mit Deinem Brief nicht abwarten, weil ich der Trudi versprochen habe, nach Gmunden mit ihr zum Umgang zu gehen. Ich
14. {19 June}	hL4	Nur noch 8 Tage, dann sind wir wieder beisammen. Ich kann's wirklich schon nicht erwarten. Und fortwährend, wenn's hier so recht schön ist, muss ich
15. {20 June}	hL4	Du bist doch bös auf mich, auch wenn Du es nicht zugestehst. Aber wirklich ungerecht. Schau, ich schreib' Dir ja alles was hier vorgeht. Mehr geht eben
16. {21 June}	hL6	Bin ich wirklich immer so ekelhaft zu Dir? Und Du bist immer, immer gut zu mir. Du solltest mich vielleicht wirklich manchmal prügeln (ich würde aber zur
17. {22 June}	hL4	Nun noch 6 Tage, dann bist Du da. Mir vergehen eigentlich die letzten Tage viel langsamer. Ich bin eben schon zu ungeduldig. — Ich weiss nicht was da zu thun
18. {23 June}	hL4	Nun bist Du 14 Tage von mir weg, und die 4 Tage die nun kommen, kommen mir so unendlich lang vor. Es ist wirklich schon ekelhaft. — Dass Gerstl erst
19. {24 June}	hL4	Du bist so lieb und gut, und ich freue mich über alles was Du mir schreibst so riesig. Ich hab Dich auch sehr, sehr lieb, und ich könnte ohne Dich nicht leben.
20. {25 June}	hL3	Ich freue mich unendlich, dass Du doch schon Freitag kommst, wenn es nur wirklich wäre! Vergiss nicht mir noch genau den Zug zu schreiben mit dem Du
21. {28 Aug.}	hL1	Ich konnte gestern nicht mehr nach Wien fahren und habe hier übernachtet. Ich fahre erst heute abends. Ich bin sehr, sehr unglücklich. Möchtest Du mich noch

Table 1 (*continued*)

DATE	FORMAT	INCIPIIT FOLLOWING SALUTATION
22. {ca. 29 Aug.}	hL3	Ich wollte Dir nicht schreiben, aber da bin ich in unsere Wohnung gekommen und da hab ich müssen. Du kannst ruhig weiterlesen. Ich werde Dich nicht
23. {29 Aug.}	hL1	Ich danke Dir vielmals für Deine Aufmerksamkeit. Du hast mir eine riesige Freude damit gemacht. Ich habe mich auch gar nicht einsam gefühlt, weil ich
24. {ca. 31 Aug.}	hL6	Ich wusste nicht, daß mir so rasch geschrieben werden wird, und habe deshalb erst heute Deine Briefe holen lassen. Du kannst Dir denken, daß es mir schreck-

*Notes:* *h* indicates a handwritten item, *L* a letter, and *C* a card; the number following tells the number of pages. All of the items are located at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. All were mailed from Traunstein, except for nos. 1, 23, and 24 from Vienna, and nos. 12 and 22 from Gmunden. None of the letters is dated, although reliable dates can be deduced from the envelope postmarks and, in a few instances, from the content of the letter itself. Capitalization is regularized, although punctuation is left as in the originals. The list corrects a number of errors found in the "Preliminary Inventory" of Schoenberg's Correspondence, *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 18 (1995–96), 39.

On or about 8 June, Mathilde, accompanied by her mother and two children, traveled to the Traunsee in the Salzkammergut to make arrangements for a summer retreat, in the same area where they had vacationed during the previous summer. Schoenberg remained behind in Vienna until the end of the month to continue teaching and to complete other work. Mathilde wrote to her husband every day during this separation, and, although Schoenberg's letters from the same time have apparently not survived, Mathilde's comments make clear his suspicions of her and his growing emotional distress.

The indiscretions between Mathilde and Gerstl are fresh in the composer's mind—oddly, though, Schoenberg seems to have laid blame for them solely on Mathilde, not Gerstl. Her responses to her husband's doubts and accusations form a subtext present in virtually every letter. She repeatedly professes her love for him—addressing him by the pet name "Hagerl"—and she is often coy in trying to allay his suspicions: "My dear Hagerl, your letters make me very happy. But, really, you still doubt that I care for you? Why? . . . I asked Görgi what I should write—he said, 'come.' I asked Trudi if I should write you the truth—softly she said, 'nein.' Now you know every-

thing!"<sup>38</sup> In other letters, Mathilde directly addresses her husband's misgivings: "I hope that this summer will go by without incident," she writes on 15 June. "What more do you want to know about Gerstl? I have already written to you very plainly that I long only *for you*. What still upsets you? Are you content with me now?"<sup>39</sup> Schoenberg had evidently told her that he was desolate (*öde*), unable to sleep, and apt to find comfort only in drink. Slyly, she advised him to ask someone to stay with him, and he asked his neighbor Gerstl—the logical choice—who declined. His accusations of her infidelity were apparently unrelenting. "I know nothing about a long trip that I am supposed to have made," she wrote on 21 June. "Neither by boat nor by foot. So you need not be concerned. My longest walk was to Gmunden and Hoisen,

<sup>38</sup>"Mein lieber Hagerl. Deine Briefe machen mir wirklich riesige Freude. Eigentlich aber zweifelst Du noch immer, dass ich Dich lieb habe. Warum? . . . Görgi habe ich gefragt was ich Dir schreiben soll, er sagt 'komm.' Trudi habe ich gefragt ob ich die Wahrheit schreiben soll, hat sie sehr leise 'nein' gesagt. Also weisst Du jetzt alles!" (from letter no. 5).

<sup>39</sup>"Ich hoffe der Sommer wird ohne Streit vergehn.—Was willst Du denn wegen Gerstl noch wissen? Ich hab Dir doch deutlich genug geschrieben, ich seh{n}e mich *nur nach Dir*. Was beunruhigt Dich denn noch? Bist Du heute mit mir zufrieden?" (from letter no. 9).



by boat to Ramsau, Steinhaus."<sup>40</sup> Finally she boiled over: "Am I really so disgusting to you? And you are always, always good to me. Sometimes you would like to beat me up (but I would fight back). You are always good and I am insufferable. That's the way it is and always has been. It upsets me so because I care for you so much. But you know I cannot tell you that and you should really know that I can't."<sup>41</sup>

Schoenberg arrived in Traunstein on 26 June, a day before Gerstl, whose presence at the summer gathering insured that the atmosphere would be explosive. The next two months witnessed an outburst of original expression by both the artist and the musician. Although Gerstl's paintings from this summer were left behind in Traunstein when he hurriedly returned to Vienna in late August and were then largely destroyed, those that exist from just before and after the summer sojourn show him breaking free from the realistic impressionism that characterizes his earlier style.

Schoenberg could not continue with George's *Hanging Gardens* songs, whose poetry speaks of a quest for love and fulfillment. Instead he returned at once to the Quartet, which he literally attacked, using it as a medium to express his emotional distress and to vent his feelings toward Mathilde. But the recent events in his life had entirely changed his conception of the work from what it had been in the previous year—an absolute composition close to the Classical formal model for the genre. No longer was he aiming to compromise with the public and to calculate a style with the hope for a popular success. Instead he placed his full confidence in a swift and spontaneous mode of composing that could express the intense tangle of emo-

tions in which he was snared. His new method of working carried his music to the very edge of atonality and forced him to reconceptualize the form that the composition would take and the meaning that it would convey.

In a boldly original stroke, Schoenberg decided to break the Quartet into two parts. The first would be the work as it existed in 1907, having two movements with these reasonably accessible in style and close to the Classical norm. The remainder would be vocal music of an extreme emotional intensity and a freedom of form that matched the work's highly advanced tonal language. The Quartet would thus reflect Schoenberg's own inner person during the crucial period in which it was written, divided in its middle by a peripeteia that represented the separation in the composer's world of 1907 from that of 1908.

For the second part Schoenberg introduced a soprano voice to sing poetry by Stefan George that could speak directly to his frame of mind. The verses that he chose were completely different from those that he had been using from *Hanging Gardens*, in which a narrator ever more imperiously demands love. He turned instead to George's recent *Der siebente Ring*, specifically to the poems "Litanei" and "Entrueckung," in which love is only a hateful illusion. In "Litanei" the speaker is wretched because of love, and he implores God to release him from its grasp and to replace it with happiness:

Töte das sehnen,  
schliesse die wunde!  
Nimm mir die liebe,  
gieb mir dein glück!<sup>42</sup>

(Kill my longing,  
close my wounds!  
Take love from me,  
give me your happiness!)

By choosing "Entrueckung," Schoenberg was able to address Mathilde even more directly. Like the Woman in *Die glückliche Hand*, she is represented in this poem by a being who has become a mere faceless voice—the "voice of

<sup>40</sup>"Von einem grösseren Ausflug den ich gemacht haben soll, weiss ich gar nichts. Weder per Boot noch zu Fuss. Du kannst also ganz unbesorgt sein. Mein weitester Spaziergang war Gmunden u. Hoisen, per Boot Ramsau, Steinhaus" (from letter no. 16).

<sup>41</sup>"Bin ich wirklich immer so ekelhaft zu Dir? Und Du bist immer, immer gut zu mir. Du solltest mich vielleicht wirklich manchmal prügeln (ich würde aber zurückhauen). Du bist eben gut und ich unausstehlich. So ist es und bleibt es. Ich kränk' mich eigentlich riesig darüber, denn ich hab Dich so riesig lieb. Aber weisst Du, sagen kann ich das nicht und eigentlich solltest Du's wissen, dass ich das nicht kann" (from letter no. 16).

<sup>42</sup>Stefan George, *Der siebente Ring*, in *Gesamt-Ausgabe der Werke, endgültige Fassung*, vols. 6–7 (Berlin: Georg Bondi, 1931), p. 149.

my anguish"—in the mind of the speaker. Her features and personality have faded as the narrator's persona dissolves in tones:

Ich fühle luft von anderem planeten.  
Mir blassen durch das dunkel die gesichter  
Die freundlich eben noch sich zu mir drehen.

Und bäum und wege die ich liebte fahlen  
Dass ich sie kaum mehr kenne und Du lichter  
Geliebter schatten—rufer meiner qualen—

Bist nun erloschen ganz in tiefern gluten  
Um nach dem taumel streitenden getobes  
Mit einem frommen schauer anzumuten.<sup>43</sup>

(I feel air from another planet.  
The darkness makes pale those faces  
That even now had turned toward me in friend-  
ship.

And wan the trees and paths that I loved  
So that I scarcely know them, and You light  
Beloved shadow—voice of my anguish—

Seem now quite extinguished in the deep embers,  
Only after the din of strife and hubbub  
To reappear with a calm trembling.)

Schoenberg's compositional materials show him gradually realizing his plan for the second part of the Quartet. About a week after arriving at the Traunsee, Schoenberg received a letter (dated 5 July 1908) from his student Karl Horwitz, whom he had evidently asked to copy out "Litanei" and "Entrueckung" from George's *Der siebente Ring*—the work only recently having appeared in print. "Many thanks for the poems," he responded to Horwitz on 7 July. "Only now can I begin."<sup>44</sup> He glued Horwitz's copy of the poems into the sketchbook, which had remained unused since the previous winter, in the margin of p. 105. Here he jotted down several themes using words from "Entrueckung"—ideas that later reappeared in the fourth movement—although his marginal note "III[.] Satz Streich Quartett" suggests that he at least briefly contemplated this as the third movement, presumably replacing the sketch with six flats that he had made the

previous year. In its final form, "Entrueckung" conforms largely to the original conception of the Quartet. It does not overtly share themes with the earlier movements, only subtly reusing motives that had already been heard. The sequence of events in the movement conforms loosely to a sonata form that could readily be followed by the listener, especially with the aid of images from the text, the melodious and largely diatonic main and subsidiary themes (at mm. 21 and 52 respectively), and a clear reprise at m. 100 where the two ideas are stated simultaneously. The movement also alludes repeatedly to tonic and dominant chords in the home key of F#, and it returns fully to this key in its coda beginning in m. 120. If "Entrueckung" had remained as the third movement, there would have been relatively little sense that it initiated a new cycle within the work or that it represented the onset of a great reversal of circumstances—the model that Schoenberg had now chosen for the work's overall form.

On the later pages of the sketchbook, Schoenberg's plan continued to crystallize. Page 106 contains a twenty-nine-measure fragment of a quartet movement using a key signature of two flats; its relationship to the Second Quartet is uncertain since it has no apparent connection to any music in the final version, although its placement in the sketchbook suggests that it was somehow intended for this work, possibly the beginning of an abortive finale. Then on p. 108 Schoenberg began to compose yet another movement, using George's "Litanei" as text, and now he proceeded with an astonishing confidence and speed. His concentration was so intense that the setting—the third movement in the final version—was created in no more than five days, between 7 July, the day he received the texts from Horwitz, and 11 July, the date he recorded at the end of the first draft.

The form of "Litanei"—both the design itself and the very purpose it serves—is unlike anything that was even hinted at in the initial conception of the Quartet. Far from using a Classical archetype that could create for the listener a familiar sequence of events, the structure of the movement is entirely new and intricate to a degree that prefigures the formalisms of *Pierrot lunaire* and the pre-twelve-tone com-

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>44</sup>"[B]esten Dank für die Gedichte. Jetzt kann ich erst anfangen" (letter from Schoenberg to Karl Horwitz, 5 July 1908, Schoenberg Collection, Library of Congress).

positions. Two constructive patterns coexist. One begins as a continuous chain of variations on the theme introduced in mm. 1–9. In m. 50 these variations give way to a free and fragmented development that leads to passionate climax in the voice on the words “nimm mir die Liebe” (mm. 63–66). An exhausted coda finally settles on an E $\flat$ -minor triad. The music also exhibits a fragmented ternary design. Its “main theme” (so called by Schoenberg himself) is not the variations subject, but an idea first presented in the voice and violins in m. 14.<sup>45</sup> A contrasting theme arises in the same lines in m. 43, and a climactic restatement of the main theme occurs at m. 59.

“Litanei” also contains a dramatic return to the intricate large-scale cyclicism of themes that had characterized the Chamber Symphony but was avoided in the other movements of the Quartet. All of the thematic material for “Litanei” is drawn from phrases and motives from the first and second movements. The makeup of the variations subject is especially original as Schoenberg fits together three prominent motifs from the first movement and one from the second, changing them in rhythm and tonality to produce a new composite theme. Although themes for “Entrueckung” had been drafted before “Litanei” was composed, none is referred to in this movement, either in its sketches or final version, suggesting that “Litanei” was always intended as a third movement rather than as a recapitulatory finale.

The way that Schoenberg deploys motives from the first two movements also reinforces the role of “Litanei” as the beginning of a new direction within the work as a whole. The movement does not develop these materials in the same sense as in the Chamber Symphony or First Quartet, where themes grow constantly from beginning to end into an organic unity. The motives of “Litanei” instead seem reconstituted, as though Schoenberg had blasted the work that existed before July 1908 into pieces, which he then picked up and reforged into an entirely new musical argument.

After completing “Litanei” on 11 July, Schoenberg returned to the second movement.

It is unclear from the sketchbook exactly where in this movement he had broken off work in the latter months of 1907. Sketches and drafts for the initial scherzo and the beginning of the trio occupy the majority of pp. 93–101; pp. 102–04 contain other compositions, including the song “Ich darf nicht dankend,” which is dated 17 December 1907 at its conclusion on p. 103. The sketchbook was then unused until early July 1908. A clue to the chronology of the scherzo movement is provided by a statement that the composer made in a 1946 lecture, during which he recalled having written three-fourths of this movement in less than two days.<sup>46</sup> Given the very involved and hesitant sketching for the opening passages, this conclusive two-day period must have occurred just before 27 July 1908, the date that he entered at the end of the full draft on p. 115 of the sketchbook. The remaining portion of the movement is likely to have been materials for the opening scherzo and the beginning of the trio up to m. 132, which had been entered on pp. 93–101.

Almost certainly the episode that quotes “Alles ist hin!” (mm. 165–92) was conceived as part of the movement only in July of 1908. The chronology of the “Alles ist hin!” quotation has often been misinterpreted in the literature on the Second Quartet. The song appears two times in Schoenberg’s sketches and drafts, first on an undated page (archive page **Sk** 769) in the so-called Anna Sketchbook (see plate 1), then in a draft for mm. 160–76 at the bottom of p. 100 in Sketchbook III. Since the latter occurrence is just before the aforementioned date of 17 December 1907, it has been wrongly assumed that the quotation was composed at about this time and was part of Schoenberg’s initial conception of the movement. Throughout Sketchbook III, as elsewhere in his musical manuscripts, Schoenberg normally entered a date of completion at the end of a first full draft of a composition or movement. But the placement of these dates in his sketchbooks is often misleading as to the chronology of music that appears on the intervening pages. This is because Schoenberg often leapt ahead to pages

<sup>45</sup>Schoenberg, “Notes on the Four String Quartets,” p. 48.

<sup>46</sup>Schoenberg, “Heart and Brain in Music” (1946), in *Style and Idea*, p. 55.

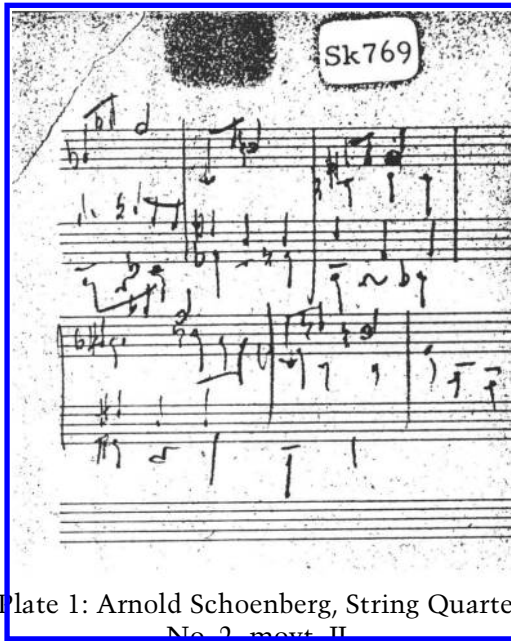


Plate 1: Arnold Schoenberg, String Quartet No. 2, movt. II, fragment from the "Anna" Sketchbook. Used by permission of Belmont Music Publishers, Los Angeles.

further along in a sketchbook and subsequently returned to earlier blank areas to continue previous lines of thought. This practice is especially apparent in drafts for the trio of the second movement of the Second Quartet, which leapfrog over twenty-three pages of Sketchbook III, at which point there is little evidence of a steady chronological continuity.

Despite this uncertainty, a date for the song sketch can be approximated by an analysis of notational factors. At the top of p. 101 of the sketchbook Schoenberg drafted the opening of the trio (later to become mm. 98–132 of the finished work). The beginning of this passage, together with a diplomatic transcription, is shown in ex. 2. That this draft for the opening of the trio precedes any of its other sketches or drafts can be deduced from the uniquely preliminary rhythmic-metric notation of the figure in the violin (see ex. 2). In all of the later drafts where this motif occurs, Schoenberg used a renoted form involving sixteenth notes and eighth-note triplets—a revision that is shown in ex. 3 (containing mm. 98–101 of the final version).

In July 1908, when Schoenberg hurriedly continued the draft of the trio from m. 132, he had

already filled the next nine pages of the sketchbook with ideas for the third and fourth movements of the Quartet and with other shorter compositions, so he picked up his train of thought for the trio on p. 111, where he entered mm. 132–60, now using the later and more normative rhythm for the violin figure. Then he continued the draft by working backward in the sketchbook, finding blank areas to fill in. The first of these was on p. 100—just before the occurrence of the date 17 December 1907 on p. 103. At the bottom of p. 100 he wrote down mm. 160–76 of the trio, again using the later notation for the violin figure and now bringing in the episode that quotes from "Alles ist hin!" He continued by leaping ahead to the bottom of p. 110, where he entered a draft of mm. 177–99, and, finally, ahead still further to pp. 113–15, where he completed the movement.

The choice of the song *Alles ist hin!* was apposite in the second movement for several reasons. Its opening rhythm, made from a dotted quarter followed by three eighth notes, was already present in the work, especially in mm. 68–69 and 77 of the first movement.<sup>47</sup> The song also had the potential to mask Schoenberg's personal voice—spoken with a grimace worthy of Pierrot lunaire—as the quotation glides easily out of the dissonant and chromatic music that comes before it and then dissolves effortlessly into the motivic materials of both the first and second movements. "It's all over," read the unsung words of the song, a comment that must be understood on different levels.<sup>48</sup> The least credible interpretation is that

<sup>47</sup>In his article "'O Du Lieber Augustin': Der Scherzo-Satz im II. Streichquartett von Arnold Schönberg," (in *Bericht über den 1. Kongreß der Internationalen Schönberg-Gesellschaft*, ed. Rudolf Stephan [Vienna: Elisabeth Lafite, 1978], pp. 246–62), Ernst Ludwig Waeltner finds the song to be the "thematic kernel" (thematisch Kern) of the entire scherzo movement, although this conclusion is based on the unproved assumption that the quotation was in the composer's mind from the outset.

<sup>48</sup>The meaning of the song quotation has been interpreted in differing ways in the literature on this work. Walter Frisch (*The Early Works of Arnold Schoenberg*, p. 266) finds it to be an allusion to the removal of traditional tonality—a "self-referential commentary on the disintegration of the musical language." This is also the viewpoint of Reinhold Brinkmann (*Arnold Schönberg: Drei Klavierstücke Op. 11* [Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1969], pp. 15–23), who underscores the distorted presentation of the song as an ironic gesture, and Elmar Budde ("Zitat, Col-



Example 2: Arnold Schoenberg, String Quartet No. 2, op. 10, movt. II, mm. 98–101 (sketch {by permission of Belmont Music Publishers} and diplomatic transcription).

Example 3: Arnold Schoenberg, String Quartet No. 2, op. 10, movt. II, mm. 98–101 (final version).

lage, Montage," in *Die Musik der sechziger Jahre*, ed. Rudolf Stephan, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für neue Musik

und Musikerziehung Darmstadt, 12 [Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne, 1972], pp. 26–38].



Schoenberg was referring directly to himself—to his marriage and domestic situation. These were still intact, albeit strained, when the Quartet was reconceived. A more plausible reading is that he was pointing to triadic tonality, which was certainly on its last legs in 1908. But why then does the Quartet as a whole move squarely back to the key of F# major in the coda of the last movement? The most convincing interpretation may well have to do with the immediate context, the first part of the Quartet—its themes, its forms, its familiarity, its distance from his own artistic personality—which was nearly finished both literally and figuratively, ready to be supplanted by a new type of music in the second part of the work. O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!

The exact date of completion of the work is unknown, but it was definitely before the end of August, when Schoenberg hurriedly left Traunstein to find his wife in Vienna and attempt to reconstruct his marriage. In an undated letter to Arnold Rosé bearing his Traunstein address, Schoenberg announced that the new quartet was at last finished:

Dear Herr Concertmaster:

I have finished a new string quartet and wanted to ask if you would like to undertake the first performance. In any case let me briefly describe the piece for you, then if you wish I will have the parts copied out right away. There are four movements, not long. I estimate that the first lasts about 9, the second about 7, the 3d about 5, the 4th about 9 minutes. The first is very easy. The second is very hard—technically so for each player and consequently also for the ensemble. The 3d and 4th have voice, using poetry by Stefan George, for a high mezzo-soprano with much depth, like [Marie] Gutheil.

I must warn you in advance that these two movements have enormous difficulties. Less so technically for the instruments as in the ensemble. It will be up to the players to find the right tone for the accompaniment. I consider this very difficult, because it must all be brought forth with complete freedom. Above all, the voice part is extraordinarily difficult. Very difficult intervals, technical difficulties, and very hard to keep in tune with the accompaniment.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>49</sup>“Sehr geehrter Herr Konzertmeister, ich habe ein neues Streich-Quartett fertig und möchte Sie fragen, ob Sie Lust haben die Uraufführung davon zu übernehmen. Ich will

A short time after the Quartet was completed, the affair between Mathilde and Gerstl burst into full view. One account has it that Schoenberg caught Gerstl *flagrante delicto* with his wife.<sup>50</sup> Mathilde later complained to her husband that she could explain the event, whatever it was (see the letter below), and it is possible that she was posing for Gerstl nude, as she had apparently already done, presumably without her husband's knowledge.<sup>51</sup> It is clear from letters that Mathilde wrote to Schoenberg immediately after she left him that this eruption occurred on or about 27 August, after which she returned to Vienna. The often-stated assumption that she then moved in with Gerstl is not supported by the content of her letters. The day following the breakup she wrote Schoenberg an emotion-laden and possibly suicidal letter:

I didn't intend to write to you, but when I arrived at our apartment I just had to. You can read on in peace—I am not going to ask you to take me back. If it is possible for what I have done to be made good by the great pain that it has inflicted, then I have certainly made it good. What I have suffered since yesterday I cannot nor will not describe to you. It has been a fitting punishment—I know that—but it has been frightful. My dear, dear children. I think I will never see them again. . . . And how you must hate me! I would have wanted to say a few things in my own defense, but you wouldn't have believed

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Ihnen jedenfalls das Stück ein wenig beschreiben, und wenn Sie es denn wünschen, lasse ich sofort die Stimmen ausschreiben. Es sind 4 nicht lange Sätze. Ich schätze der erste dauert cirka 9, der zweite cirka 7, der 3te cirka 5, der 4te cirka 9 Minuten. Der erste ist sehr leicht. Der zweite ist sehr schwer, technisch für jeden einzelnen und infolgedessen wohl auch im Zusammenspiel. Der 3te und 4te aber sind mit Gesang, nach Gedichten von Stefan George für einen hohen Mezzosopran mit viel Tiefe, also Gutheil.

Ich muss Sie im vorhinein aufmerksam machen, dass diese beiden Sätze enorm schwierig sind. Weniger technisch für die Instrumente, als im Zusammenspiel. Denn es wird sich für die Spieler darum handeln, den richtigen Ton für die Begleitung zu finden. Und das halte ich für sehr schwer, weil das ganze mit absoluter Freiheit herauskommen muss. Vor allem aber ist die Gesangstimme ungewöhnlich schwer. Sehr schwere Intervalle, technische Schwierigkeiten und sehr schwer gegen die Begleitung rein zu intonieren" (letter from Arnold Schoenberg to Arnold Rosé, undated, London, University of Western Ontario).

<sup>50</sup>Kallir, *Richard Gerstl, Oskar Kokoschka*, p. 11.

<sup>51</sup>The resulting painting is shown in Schröder, *Richard Gerstl*, no. 55.

them. . . . I have only one hope—that I will not live much longer.<sup>52</sup>

After a few days she professed an acceptance of her situation. She writes:

In general I am now rather more at peace. As long as I had hope for improvement, I cried; now that I have none, I am peaceful. I will not tell you my address. You could communicate with someone (having the best intentions), and he could report. But I will remain alone. I want no consolation. Whatever comfort could be imparted to me would be so slight that it would do no good. I have already told myself everything else.—If it will put your mind at ease, let me say that I have a nice room with decent people *not* in Vienna.—What are my dear, dear children doing? How I love you all! . . . You would never know that a person could be so unhappy without dying—I could not even have imagined it.<sup>53</sup>

With this the letters stop, suggesting that Mathilde had decided to return to her husband—“for the sake of the children,” Schoenberg later told his student Viktor Krüger.<sup>54</sup> About two months later—on the night of 4 November 1908—the despondent Gerstl hanged himself

<sup>52</sup>“Ich wollte Dir nicht schreiben, aber da bin ich in unsere Wohnung gekommen und da hab ich müssen. Du kannst ruhig weiter lesen. Ich werde Dich nicht bitten mich wiederzunehmen. Wenn es möglich ist, dass was ich gethan habe durch grossen Schmerz gut zu machen ist, dann mache ich es sicher gut. Was ich seit gestern leide, kann und will ich Dir nicht beschreiben. Es ist gerechte Strafe, ich weiss es, aber es ist fürchterlich. Meine lieben, lieben Kinder. Ich glaube ich werde sie nie wiedersehen. . . . Und wie Du mich hassen musst! Ich hätte Dir gerne noch einiges zu meiner Rechtfertigung gesagt, aber Du glaubst mir ja doch nicht. . . . Ich habe nur noch eine Hoffnung, dass ich nicht länger noch leben werde” (from letter no. 23).

<sup>53</sup>“Ich bin im Ganzen jetzt etwas ruhiger. Solange ich Hoffnung gehabt habe auf Besserung habe ich geweint, nun hab ich keine mehr und bin ruhig. Meine Adresse werde ich Dir nicht sagen. Du könntest sie irgend einem Menschen (in der besten Absicht) mittheilen, und der käme dann. Ich will aber allein sein. Ich mag keinen Trost. Was man mir tröstendes sagen kann ist so wenig, dass es nicht dafür steht. Alles andere hab ich mir schon selbst gesagt.—Wenn es Dich beruhigt, will ich Dir nur sagen, dass ich ein nettes Zimmer bei anständigen Leute *nicht* in Wien habe.—Was machen meine lieben, lieben Kinder? Wie ich Euch alle lieb habe! . . . Weissst Du, dass man so unglücklich sein kann ohne zu sterben. Habe ich mir nie vorstellen können” (from letter no. 24).

<sup>54</sup>See the letter from Viktor Krüger to Gertrud Schoenberg of 10 August 1954, in Nuria Nono-Schoenberg, *Arnold Schönberg*, pp. 48–49.

in his atelier in the Liechtensteinstraße. Mathilde then wrote to his brother Alois: “Believe me, of the two of us Richard took the easier way. To have to live the way I do is terribly hard.”<sup>55</sup>

Despite its devastating effect on his personal life, Schoenberg’s summer in Traunstein was highly productive compositionally. The composer returned to Vienna in late August 1908 with the Quartet completed, and he immediately returned to the *Hanging Gardens* songs, which to that point had amounted only to a small and loosely connected Lieder collection.<sup>56</sup> Now the overall form of the song project underwent a transformation as far reaching as that of the Quartet, becoming a large narrative cycle that tells of an initiation to love and its bitter destruction. As in the Second Quartet and the George cycle, Schoenberg continued during the next fifteen years to use his music as a medium by which to work out his feelings of betrayal—most directly so in the drama *Die glückliche Hand*, the poetic *Requiem*,<sup>57</sup> finally in the Petrarchan sonnet (beginning “Oh, that I might find relief from that resentment against her”), which he chose to be the centerpiece of his Serenade, op. 24, composed in 1922–23.

The Second String Quartet represents Schoenberg’s first major confrontation with a compositional paradox with which he would grapple for his entire atonal period—a dialectic between form and expression, constraint and free emotion, Apollonian and Dionysian utterance. His earlier conception of the work aimed cautiously at a mixture of the two, an amalgamation that is also apparent in the music of other progressive composers—including Stravinsky, Bartók, and Berg—at roughly the same time. But he found that this mixed idiom could not sustain his inspiration, and beginning with the Second Quartet he began to look inwardly, to rely for artistic stimulation on a

<sup>55</sup>“Glauben Sie mir, Richard hat von uns beiden den leichteren Weg gewählt. Leben zu müssen in so einem Fall ist schrecklich schwer” (cited in Breicha, *Gerstl und Schönberg*, p. 24).

<sup>56</sup>Concerning the evolution of the George cycle, see Bryan R. Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg, 1908–1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 47–48.

<sup>57</sup>Arnold Schoenberg, “Requiem,” in *Texte* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1926), pp. 31–36.

personal perspective in which emotions were raw and untamed. These led him to create a tonal order in his music that seemed to conform to his emotional state and definitively made his music the “representation of myself” that was reported by Wellesz in 1912. This outlook provoked Schoenberg’s musical imagination and helped him to produce the great outpouring of works of the early atonal period, of which the Second Quartet is the herald. But the price that Schoenberg paid was high. He would never enjoy the popular success that he desired—a success that he came bitterly to envy in his contemporaries such as Stravinsky and even Berg. He was left in the foreseeable future only with the prospect of the *succès de scandale* and with the consolation of an uncertain future time when his music might be accepted and applauded.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Schoenberg’s involvement with the “Mißerfolgs-Erfolg” is recounted in Martin Thrun, *Neue Musik im deutschen Musikleben bis 1933* (Bonn: Orpheus, 1995), I, 113–23.

Early in 1909, when Schoenberg published the Second String Quartet—a work of such enormous personal and historical significance—its dedication could only have been made to one person, the one who had forced it into being and shaped its emotional and stylistic content and its outward design. The inscription at the head of the score reads simply, “To my wife.”



**Abstract.**

A reassessment of the compositional documents and chronology of Arnold Schoenberg’s String Quartet No. 2, op. 10, shows that the composer, in an effort to make the work acceptable to the public, at first intended it to be an absolute composition close to the Classical norm. But midway through its period of creation this conception was discarded in favor of a more original formative model that grew from an intense process of self-reflection. The content of hitherto unpublished letters from his wife written during these months suggests that this transformation was driven by an objectification of Schoenberg’s private world.