

KATHRYN PUFFETT AND BARBARA SCHINGNITZ

Three MEN *of* LETTERS

ARNOLD SCHÖNBERG
ALBAN BERG AND
ANTON WEBERN
1906–1921

HOLLITZER



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Kathryn Puffett, Barbara Schingnitz:
Three Men of Letters. Arnold Schönberg, Alban Berg and Anton Webern, 1906–1921

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To Derrick's memory, he who taught me so much about music, and about life.
— Kathryn Puffett

To my mother and father, and – of course – to Pip!
— Barbara Schingnitz

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— Kathryn Puffett

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— Barbara Schingnitz

CONVENTIONS

In a discussion of these three very different men as seen in their correspondence with each other we have felt it important to maintain as much as possible in our translations their quite distinctive styles of letter-writing. Thus we have tried to present each letter in a style as close to the original as possible, maintaining awkwardnesses, misspellings and incorrect grammar where these occur in the originals and not 'glossing over', correcting grammatical mistakes, or adjusting order so as to make sentences more graceful. This is difficult, of course, as the correct order of things is very different in English than it is in German, but we have made every effort to reflect faithfully whether the words used and the order in which they are used are elegant, awkward, correct, incorrect, proper, colloquial or occasionally even profane. We have attempted to translate the same word in the same way whenever it occurs in the writing of each of the three men. We have retained several letters in their entirety for the purpose of illustrating these three men's very different styles of letter writing.

Webern sometimes moves from Sütterlin to Roman script, usually for names, but occasionally as a way of emphasising a word, or even only part of a word. We have not indicated these changes because we feel that the resulting text would look too cluttered, and this was something that was done anyway in most cases only when writing names. In the letters of all three men things are often underlined, once, twice or even three times. We have not followed the practice used in the *Briefwechsel der Wiener Schule* series of changing underlinings to italics, since italic font is not something that occurs in handwriting. Instead, we have retained the original single, double and triple underlinings, as these were surely meant to show degrees of importance, and we make the distinction between several words being underlined individually or altogether with a single line. We are aware, however, that this is not completely reliable. In a letter to Berg of 28 November 1913 Schönberg instructed Berg that he should 'always underline the main points, particularly those I am to answer. It's hard for me to write to you, since to do so I'd have to read your letter 3–4 times and your handwriting is too illegible for that.'¹ From this one can assume that Schönberg himself probably underlined things he thought important as he read the letters the first time. (In view of this instruction to Berg and the fact that has been remarked on several times that Schönberg was not a reader and seldom read anything all the way through, one wonders whether he ever did in fact read Berg's letters completely.) So without seeing the original letters (and possibly not even then) there is no sure way, in letters to Schönberg, of distinguishing Berg's underlinings from those of Schönberg.

¹ *Briefwechsel*, p. 457; *Correspondence*, p. 196. (These short forms are explained below.)

Work titles are left as found in the letters, where in some cases they are enclosed in quotation marks but most often are not differentiated in any way from the surrounding text. German words and phrases are frequently quoted in the text but are not italicised.

Line breaks are indicated with forward strokes (/), omitted text with [...]. The indication / [...] / means that one or often several complete paragraphs have been omitted. Spaced dots without square brackets indicate elisions in the original letters. Following usual practice, anything in square brackets is an editorial insertion unless otherwise indicated. Both Berg and Webern make quite frequent use of dashes of varying lengths; in most cases these have been retained. We have also kept Berg's and Schönberg's frequent (but not consistent) use of roman numerals (and occasionally arabic numbers) with full stops to indicate ordinal numbers, 'I.' meaning first, 'II.' second and so on.

Both Berg and Schönberg indulge in wordplay on occasion, and we have tried to find English words that replicate this. In cases where this is impossible we have explained the double meanings in footnotes.



In view of the length of the book, we have decided to use abbreviations for the books of correspondence between Berg and Schönberg, which are cited repeatedly. We use *Correspondence* to refer to *The Berg–Schönberg Correspondence*, edited and translated by Juliane Brand, Christopher Hailey and Donald Harris, published by Macmillan in Basingstoke in 1987, which is a selection of letters in English. For the German edition of all the letters, which is in two volumes, edited by Juliane Brand, Christopher Hailey and Andreas Meyer and published in 2007 by Schott in Mainz as No. 3 of the series *Briefwechsel der Wiener Schule*, we use the abbreviations *Briefwechsel I* and *Briefwechsel II*.

In the footnotes we give both sources for those letters from the Berg–Schönberg correspondence that have been translated in *Correspondence*. In general we have followed the translations in *Correspondence*, but we have often altered these – sometimes only very slightly, to make them consistent with current UK style or to correct what was obviously a typo, but at other times more extensively, in keeping with our intention to maintain literal translations and to retain awkwardnesses when they occur. We always cite *Briefwechsel* first, followed by *Correspondence*, even in those few cases where we quote *Correspondence* exactly.

One of our sources is the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, which we have indicated only as ÖNB.

We have retained the original German forms of address, greeting and closing in all cases because close translations of these into English ('my dear' etc.) would

give them a flavour quite unlike what would be done in similar situations in English today. We have also left the German ‘hoffentlich’ untranslated, since it is grammatically correct in the letters, whereas to translate it as ‘hopefully’ would not only change the meaning slightly, but be grammatically incorrect in English.

We use the spelling Schönberg because this is the way the man spelled his name in the years with which this book is concerned, 1906–21. He changed the spelling to Schoenberg only when he moved to the United States in 1933.

PREFACE

Originally this book was to be an examination of the unlikely but obviously close friendship of two very different young men through their letters to each other, in an attempt to explain how such an affinity could have come about. But it soon became evident that this could not be done without including also the letters to and from their teacher, because Berg and Webern would almost certainly never have become friends if it hadn't been for Schönberg, and their correspondence with each other is mostly about him. The frequency of his name is staggering: in the 320 or so letters of Berg and Webern to each other between 1910 and 1921 that survive, Schönberg's name is mentioned more than 940 times, and he or one of his projects is the major subject of most of the letters. The two former pupils coddle him as one might a favourite child, censoring which of the reviews of his music are to be shown to him, searching for ways of supporting him financially and furthering his cause, trying to think of how to persuade someone to grant him a (sufficiently exalted) position in an institution in Vienna, worrying about and trying to prevent his being called up for service in the First World War and then, when he was called up in spite of their efforts, trying to think of someone who could succeed in getting him released. They are for ever anxious about his whereabouts, as he travels around a lot and writes only infrequently, and nearly all their thoughts and hopes and energies are centred on or related to him. Tragically, in Berg's case this kept his own composition to a minimum during what should have been for him a fruitful decade. So it is that the friendship of the two pupils cannot be considered apart from their relationship with their teacher. A look through their correspondence seems the most appropriate way of observing this at first hand.

All three of the men concerned were intrigued to varying degrees – in one case one might almost say obsessed – with the idea of the palindrome and the possibilities it offers in music. One of us has written at length elsewhere about the overwhelming importance of the palindrome in the music of Webern and also about the palindrome in Schönberg's 'Der Mondfleck' in *Pierrot lunaire*,² and a large-scale palindrome is an essential part of Berg's last opera, *Lulu*.³ Thus it seems particularly serendipitous that a palindrome of sorts should describe as well the life spans of the three men. The teacher, Arnold Schönberg, lived the longest of

² Kathryn Bailey (Puffett), *The Twelve-Note Music of Anton Webern. Old Forms in a New Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) and 'Structural Imagery: *Pierrot lunaire* Revisited', *Tempo* 60/237 (July 2006), pp. 2–22.

³ This is discussed, for example, by Douglas Jarman in "Remembrance of things that are to come": Some Reflections on Berg's Palindromes', in *Alban Berg and his World*, ed. Christopher Hailey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 195–221; and George Perle, *The Operas of Alban Berg*, Vol. 2: *Lulu* (University of California Press, Berkeley–Los Angeles, 1985).

the three, having been born in 1874 and dying in 1951 at the age of seventy-six. The older of his two pupils, Anton Webern, born in 1883, was killed by a soldier of the American occupation in 1945 at the age of sixty-one. And Alban Berg, the youngest of the three, born in 1885, was also the shortest lived, dying suddenly and quite unexpectedly of blood poisoning at the age of fifty in 1935. Admittedly the palindrome is a very imperfect one, but the three lives can be charted roughly in the following way:

Schönberg	1874	—————	1951
Webern	1883	—————	1945
Berg	1885	—————	1935

Interestingly, the centre of each of these three lives falls somewhere between 1910 and 1915, years that were quite turbulent for all three men. Mahler, who was much admired by the Schönberg crowd, died in 1911, which was also the year in which both Berg and Webern were married, and in which Schönberg suddenly left Vienna and moved his family to Berlin as the result of a violent altercation with a neighbour. In 1912 a collection of adulatory essays written by his pupils and the artists Gütersloh and Kandinsky, a project that Schönberg himself had instigated, was presented to him by his pupils. The infamous Skandalkonzert occurred on 31 March 1913. And Europe went to war in 1914. None of these was an occasion soon to be forgotten.

Of the three men, all of whom were born in Vienna and who together came to be known as the Second Viennese School, only Alban Berg was truly Viennese. He was born of Viennese parents and lived all of his life there, though he spent the summers in his family's country home in Carinthia, that of his wife's family in Steiermark and from 1932 his own Waldhaus in Carinthia. Arnold Schönberg inherited Hungarian citizenship from his father, who was born in Szécsény and had come to Vienna by way of Bratislava; his mother was born in Prague. Schönberg was peripatetic, migrating from Vienna to Berlin three times (in 1901, 1911 and 1926) before taking leave of Austro-German lands altogether in 1933, when he quit his job at the Conservatory in Berlin immediately upon being told that he was to be dismissed after three more years because of his Jewish background and moved around between several locations in western Europe, finally emigrating to the United States, where he first spent a short time teaching in Boston and New York before moving to California and settling in Hollywood. At the time of his death he was contemplating a move to New Zealand.⁴ While he claimed to despise both Berlin and Vienna, Schönberg was officially resident in only these two cities

4 H.H. Stuckenschmidt, *Arnold Schoenberg. His Life, World and Work*, trans. Humphrey Searle (London: John Calder, 1977), p. 490.

until his move to America, though he spent a lot of time in a series of fashionable European locations in the last year or so of his official residency in Berlin. Anton Webern, whose parents left Vienna for Graz in Styria when he was quite young, spent his childhood there and in Klagenfurt in Carinthia, returning to Vienna only when he entered university. He was particularly unsettled in the decade immediately following his study with Schönberg, acquiring and then fleeing from one job after another in fits of distemper.

The three men also came from quite different social backgrounds. Schönberg grew up in Leopoldstadt, the Jewish district of Vienna, the son of a shoe seller. The family was not well off, and Schönberg attended a Realschule, where the emphasis was on practical rather than classical subjects. His father died of influenza when Schönberg was fifteen, and he had to quit school and take a job as a junior clerk in a bank to support the family. His nine and a half years in school were the only formal education he was ever to have; thus he had no classical education and officially no musical training.⁵ There is no indication that either of his parents was musical, though his maternal grandfather was a cantor, and both his younger brother Heinrich, a bass, and his cousin Hans Nachod, a tenor who was the first to sing the role of Waldemar in Schönberg's *Gurrelieder*, were singers in Zemlinsky's Opera in Prague. In any case, Schönberg himself was entirely self-taught except for what he picked up from associating with his friend and later brother-in-law Alexander Zemlinsky. In a radio interview in 1967 Theodor W. Adorno said of Schönberg: 'He was *extremely* far away from the picture of the intellectual. He was an *absolutely* naïve sort of artist, and his theories had very often the character of auxiliary hypotheses, which he invented in order to justify what he made, but were, as rationalisations, themselves of a rather naïve nature.'⁶

As a young man Schönberg had a Christian baptism and later, in the 1930s, re-embraced Judaism, but there is no indication that either of these conversions was for religious reasons, the first probably being for convenience and the second rather ostentatiously in order to become a public voice against anti-Semitism. There is very little if any mention of Schönberg's siblings (a sister in addition to brother Heinrich) in his letters.⁷ Schönberg married Zemlinsky's sister Mathilde

5 When interviewed by Hans Keller on the BBC in 1967, Schönberg's cousin Hans Nachod said 'He could not play any instrument really well', and this seems apparent from Webern's frequent reports to Berg of having played something to him on the piano. A very well-known photograph of him as a young man shows him with a cello in a group of five young men in rustic dress with instruments (one of whom was apparently Fritz Kreisler), but there is no indication in the literature that he was a competent cellist. Hans Keller, 'Portrait of Schoenberg', 1967, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bt1xxfXcXR0&app=desktop>>. Accessed on 18 October 2019.

6 *Ibid.*

7 According to Adorno, Berg once told him that Schönberg 'very rarely, if at all, spoke about his parents. You had the feeling of an absolute individual, not linked at all with any family background or national background.' *Ibid.*

in October of 1901 and they had two children. All evidence would indicate that it was an unhappy marriage. Mathilde died in 1923, and less than ten months later Schönberg married Gertrud Kolisch, the much younger sister of the violinist Rudolf Kolisch, a marriage that produced three children, two of whom were born in the United States. Schönberg's family, unlike those of Berg and Webern, owned no country house, and he had no money of his own, but he and his family nevertheless managed to live in rather splendid houses and apartments, always with a maidservant and at someone else's expense, and spent numerous summer holidays as the guests of one or another wealthy person whose acquaintance he had cultivated. Schönberg was absolutely convinced of his superiority to other men and that as such he was owed a living by them. He lived off money collected from his pupils and various philanthropists for over a decade, while the pupils who were supporting and finding support for him were themselves often near poverty.

Webern's father was a mining engineer who worked in a government ministry, and his mother played the piano and taught all her children to play at an early age. Webern also studied the cello in Klagenfurt from the age of twelve and heard a lot of music when he was young, attending and later also participating in musical events in Klagenfurt and – as reported in his early diaries – enjoying concerts, opera performances, plays and exhibitions on occasional visits to Graz and Vienna and once even to Bayreuth with his cousin Ernst Diez. Later he did a university degree in musicology with Guido Adler in Vienna. The family, whose name was von Webern until 1918, when the 'von' was dropped in accordance with a government edict, was relatively well off. Webern had two sisters, one older and one younger, to whom he was very close. His mother died in 1906, a loss that had an extraordinary effect on him for the rest of his life. He spent the summers at the Preglhof, his father's estate in Carinthia, until it was sold in 1912. He married his first cousin Wilhelmine in 1911, and they had four children. Wilhelmine seems to have been the first and only woman with whom he ever had a romantic relationship, and all indications are that they were happy together. His only close relationship with another woman was a platonic one with the married poet Hildegard Jone, whose poems he set exclusively from 1936 onwards.⁸ Although he was very interested in writings about mysticism and humanism, he was a devout Catholic, as was, presumably, his whole family and kept a kneeling stool for private prayers in his study for all of his life.⁹ In spite of his university education and his wide experience of hearing music and reading – and incredibly, in light of the sort of music he wrote in the 1920s and 1930s – Webern seems to have been rather naïve and childlike, and his letters surprisingly unorganised.

8 Barbara Schingnitz is currently preparing an edition of the complete Webern-Jone correspondence with commentary for publication by the Webern Gesamtausgabe in Basel.

9 Personal recollection of his daughter Maria Halbich in conversation with Kathryn Puffett.

Like Webern, Berg was born into a middle-class family. His father was in the export business, and his mother owned a shop selling religious items on the Stephansplatz in Vienna. The family was relatively well off and had a country house, the Berghof, on the Ossiachersee in Carinthia, where they spent the summers, but the death of his father when Berg was only ten put a serious constraint on the family's finances for the next several years. Although Berg didn't do particularly well in school, he did finish his education and, on his mother's insistence, in October 1904 got a job in accounting, which he loathed. On the death of her sister in 1906, however, his mother inherited a number of properties in Vienna, and she hired Berg to manage these, so that he was able to quit his job in accountancy,¹⁰ though this new job took a lot of his time and tied him to Vienna for the rest of his life, something that neither Schönberg nor Webern ever seemed able – or perhaps willing – to believe or understand. In 1920 he had to take over the managing of the Berghof as well until it was sold the following year.

Berg was innately a social being, and as an adult he moved in literary and intellectual circles. Personally he seems to have been the complete opposite of Webern: sophisticated, articulate and level-headed. He married Helene Nahowski, who was rumoured to be the illegitimate daughter of Emperor Franz Joseph I and who sang, though never professionally. Their voluminous correspondence leaves no doubt at all of the enduring love they had for each other, in spite of Berg's occasional attraction to other women and one now very well-known love later in life (which was not reciprocated).¹¹ They had no children,¹² but Berg mentioned Webern's children fondly in his letters to Webern.

Berg was continually issued orders and demands, and very frequently complaints, from both Schönberg and Webern for most of the years covered in this book. Schönberg demanded of him a multitude of tasks, and Webern, who was most often not living in Vienna, made constant demands of him as well, on Schönberg's behalf, always insisting that these things must be done immediately. In the

¹⁰ Rosemary Hilmar, *Alban Berg. Leben und Werken in Wien bis zu seinen ersten Erfolgen als Komponist*, Wiener musikwissenschaftliche Beiträge (Vienna: Böhlau, 1978), pp. 28–31.

¹¹ Described by Contantin Floros in *Alban Berg and Hanna Fuchs. The Story of a Love in Letters*, trans. Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008). The 'discovery' of Berg's passion for Hanna Fuchs and his expression of the same in his *Lyric Suite* caused waves of excitement in the late 1970s, when it was the subject of many articles, most particularly George Perle's 'The Secret Program of the *Lyric Suite*', in the *Newsletter of the International Alban Berg Society* 5 (June 1977), which was reprinted in German in *Musikkonzepte* 4. Perle also wrote a monograph on this subject: *Style and Idea in the Lyric Suite of Alban Berg* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1995).

¹² On 22 February 1912 Webern wrote to Berg: 'I wish for you a child as soon as possible! / Without sentimentality, it's the most beautiful thing there is.' Berg had fathered an illegitimate daughter when he was young and still at home with his parents. She never figured in his life, making herself known only after his death.

years of Schönberg's Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen he worked both Webern and Berg mercilessly, while he himself was frequently away from Vienna, attending conferences or performances of his own music or, in the case of Holland, in residence for several months.

Schönberg seems to have thrived on controversies, as if he were afraid that if his music were accepted he would lose his unique public position. He was extremely rude and scornful where critics and audiences were concerned; the disapprobation of others seemed to be his *raison d'être*, and if it didn't occur naturally, he found a way of making it happen. He demanded complete loyalty from his pupils to an extent that today is hard to imagine. He claimed to be a great admirer of Mahler, yet when Webern went to Prague to hear a performance of Mahler VIII in 1912, thereby missing a performance in Berlin of Schönberg's first string quartet, which he had heard already more than once, Schönberg wrote in his diary: 'He travels to Vienna in order to hear Mahler's Eighth Symphony. To be sure, I would like to do this also. Shows, however, that he is not as attached to me, after all, as he would like to make believe.'¹³

¹³ Hans and Rosaleen Moldenhauer, *Anton von Webern. A Chronicle of his Life and Work* (London: Victor Gollanz, 1978), p. 648, n. 12.

1

THE LETTERS

Of the three sets of correspondence with which we are concerned, to date only that between Schönberg and Berg has been published;¹⁴ both the others are currently being edited for publication.¹⁵ We wish to stress that the present book is not intended to be a scholarly edition of the letters of these three men in translation. We do not include nearly all the letters and, apart from a few exceptions, of those that are included only portions are quoted. In most cases we have not seen the letters themselves, but only scans or transcriptions of them, and we are not concerned with the type of paper used, whether the letters are written in pen or pencil etc., etc., except in those cases where these things impinge on the content, which is the only subject of this study. And this book covers only the years up to 1921, after which the three men's lives took different directions. The book would not have been possible without the good will and encouragement of the editors of the published letters and the very kind generosity of those who are preparing the rest for publication.

Both of the correspondences involving Webern are unfortunately very one-sided as the result of the destruction and corruption of a large number of Webern's papers when soldiers occupied the house that the Weberns had deserted when they fled into the mountains near the end of World War II.¹⁶ Of Schönberg's letters to Webern prior to 1922, all of which one can be sure Webern would have kept, only three survive. Berg's letters to Webern suffer in the same way, though not quite as catastrophically. Compared with 232 letters and cards from Webern to Berg – and evidence suggests that there were many more than this – only perhaps 91 or 92 letters or portions of letters from Berg to Webern survive, 27 of these being small fragments that almost certainly represent fewer than 27 letters.¹⁷

¹⁴ *Briefwechsel and Correspondence.*

¹⁵ *Briefwechsel Arnold Schönberg – Anton Webern*, ed. Regina Busch, and *Briefwechsel Anton Webern – Alban Berg*, ed. Simone Hohmaier and Rudolf Stephan, *Briefwechsel der Wiener Schule* 2 and 4 respectively, both forthcoming from Schott in Mainz.

¹⁶ Dr Werner Riemerschmid's account of his visit in December 1945 to the house in Maria Enzersdorf where the Weberns lived just prior to their flight to Mittersill in the last days of the war is reproduced in Kathryn Bailey (Puffett), *The Life of Webern* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 1–2. Most of Webern's papers had been eaten by rodents, burned by soldiers to keep warm or otherwise destroyed and defaced.

¹⁷ Berg often numbered sections of his letters, and 20 of the 27 fragments begin with a number, usually centred, at the top: six with the number I, four with the number II (or in one case '–2–'), five with III, four each with IV and VII, and one with V. A few of these can be tentatively placed as coming from the same letter, but in most cases they cannot be grouped together with any certainty. Many other fragments, unnumbered, either begin or end, or perhaps both, mid-sentence, making it obvious that they come from the middle of a larger document.

Luckily most of the letters Webern wrote to Schönberg have survived, and scans of most of these are now available online from the Arnold Schönberg Center in Vienna. We can get some idea of the number of letters from Schönberg that are missing from this correspondence by examining the surviving letters from Webern that begin with thanks for or contain some other reference to a recent letter or card from Schönberg that no longer exists. We can be sure from evidence in Webern's letters that during these years there were at least 109 letters from Schönberg, and 60 postcards.

Of the 519 known pieces of communication between Schönberg and Berg from the years 1906 to 1921,¹⁸ only 223 are from Schönberg, a large majority of the first 40 of these, from 1906 to July of 1910, when Berg ended his lessons with Schönberg, consisting of simply one or two sentences making arrangements for Berg's upcoming lessons. Of the remaining 183, eighteen are telegrams; 63 are postcards; 26 are picture postcards (many of the postcards and picture postcards are from Schönberg and several other people, who either are visiting a place of particular interest together or have just attended a concert) and eight are printed cards of one sort or another (visiting cards, thank-you cards, death or marriage announcements or folded cards with a message written on the inside, these also sometimes being not from Schönberg alone). Only 68 are letters, most of which cover less than one page, and many of these consist of only three or four lines, the longer ones being either instructions to Berg concerning the many and various jobs that Schönberg demanded of him or complaints about the way in which Berg was carrying these out, or both.

The postcard was in fact a favoured and often used means of communication, especially between Webern and Schönberg, Webern, as far as we can know, holding the record. In a correspondence that spanned altogether 35 years (1906–1941) Webern sent Schönberg 203 postcards, only 33 of which were picture postcards, these representing, as one would expect, places Webern was visiting or greetings from a group of Schönberg's pupils who had gathered together on some occasion. The preponderance of ordinary (pictureless) postcards were from the years 1906–1915, which of course included the first two years of the war; Webern sent Schönberg 42 postcards in 1914 alone, and 39 in 1915. In 1914 he complained on several occasions of the uncertainty of letters reaching their destination because of censorship and postal disruptions, as sealed letters were returned to the sender. On 23 August 1914 Webern wrote, 'I am writing a card, because I believe that is more likely to reach you' and on 18 September, 'I am always writing cards because I believe that they are more likely to arrive.' He continued to write letters occasionally; on 14 December 1914 he told Schönberg 'I sent this letter already yesterday. Today it came back here, because I had glued it shut' and on 25 May

¹⁸ Although *Briefwechsel* I and II contain 525 entries from the beginning, in 1909, to 1921, some of these are either to or from (or both) the wives or some other relative or acquaintance.

1915, 'It has never happened until now that I posted a letter to you and sealed it. [Apparently memory failed.] This time I did, unfortunately. Today it came back.' Thus the wartime postal restrictions were at least one of the reasons for the large number of postcards during the war years, though Webern had made much use of this form of communication already before this, having sent Schönberg 54 postcards in the years 1908 to 1913. Altogether, in the years we are concerned with here, 146 postcards and 24 picture postcards from Webern to Schönberg survive, and 78 postcards and ten picture postcards from Webern to Berg.

Berg, on the other hand, in the years 1910 to 1921, sent Schönberg only 48 postcards and 19 picture postcards, a relatively small number compared to his 222 letters in the same years.



In a letter of 25–26 September 1911 Berg told Schönberg that there could be no question of his discarding anything associated with Schönberg: 'How could I throw away so much as a piece of paper bearing a word of yours or a brushstroke, or even a note.'¹⁹ And so it is that the Berg–Schönberg correspondence begins with four years – 1906 to 1910 – of notes from Schönberg to Berg, almost all of only one or two sentences, all carefully saved. There are, however, no letters from Berg to Schönberg until June of 1911, after Berg's marriage in May. Perhaps Schönberg didn't consider letters from Berg worth saving until 1911, though this lacuna may result from a reticence expressed by Berg in a letter to his future wife dated 1 September 1909.

I was sincerely looking forward to a correspondence with Schönberg; but the moment I began the first letter I realised that I couldn't write in the conventional way to him, to whom I am attached in more than 'profound devotion'. I realised that these should be letters like those that I write to you, perhaps not as often, but full of meaning and offering a deep insight into my soul! And I hadn't enough resources for that. One can write only one such letter a day – and that one was for you! [...] I wouldn't have been capable of writing a letter starting roughly like: 'I have been in the country for 14 days now, the weather ... etc. etc.', and thus it happened that I didn't write the least thing, not even a picture postcard, to Schönberg, for whom I had intended the most beautiful things ...²⁰

¹⁹ A musical note. *Briefwechsel* I, p. 76; *Correspondence*, p. 20. *Correspondence* gives the date of this letter erroneously as 26–27 September.

²⁰ *Briefwechsel Alban Berg – Helene Berg*, ed. Herwig Knaus and Thomas Leibnitz, *Quellenkataloge zur Musikgeschichte* 54, Band 1 (Wilhelmshaven: Florian Noetzel, 2012), pp. 491–92; *Alban Berg. Letters to his Wife*, ed. and trans. Bernhard Grun (New York: St Martin's Press, 1971), p. 95.

On 1 June 1911 Berg sent Schönberg a postcard, giving him the address in Payerbach where he and his new wife were staying,²¹ and on 16 June he finally wrote Schönberg a proper letter, of the sort that would continue to issue from him from that moment on.²² Although we can no longer know the nature or the frequency of his letters prior to 1911 – or, indeed, whether there were any –, those from 1911 until Berg’s death in 1935 attest to a poetic and imaginative nature and a real affection. The earlier of these, those written before and during the First World War, at times express his devotion in ways that readers of today may find embarrassing, though even by today’s standards they never quite cross the line between the affectionate and the maudlin. Berg seems to have been an urbane and sensible person who thought things through and didn’t share Webern’s habit of flying off in all directions or Schönberg’s misanthropic egotism. His letters are thoughtful, literate and fluent – windows into the mind of a gentle, reasonable man whose one area of poor judgement seems to have been his inability to say no to Schönberg. There are long paragraphs, constructed of long sentences, with many ellipses and dashes. Unlike Webern’s letters, which are chaotic and repetitious, returning again and again to continue or repeat a subject dealt with earlier, and unlike Schönberg’s, which are mostly only about his own current situation and usually demanding, Berg’s often express original and interesting thoughts and ideas that are unrelated to the matters at hand. There are occasional drawings in his letters to Schönberg, though not nearly so many as in his letters to his wife, in which there are quite remarkably skilled sketches and caricatures, evidence of a talent that was never exploited. His letters to Schönberg were long and frequent, explaining things patiently and accepting blame for things that can in no way be seen as his fault. Only in 1915 did he finally accept the fact that it was not in his power to satisfy Schönberg in anything, and even then he seemed to see this also as his fault. One may wonder if Berg somehow needed Schönberg’s approval and perhaps even thrived on attempting the impossible in fulfilling all of Schönberg’s demands, since he put himself in this position for such a long time. But alternatively this can be seen as the result of an over-generous nature and a lack of self confidence.

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While the earliest letters from Berg to Schönberg to survive are from 1911, Schönberg began to get (and keep) letters from Webern in 1906. The literacy and reason that distinguish Berg’s letters set him apart from Webern, who was a man of hyperbole: adulation or loathing, both expressed in the most extreme language,

²¹ *Briefwechsel* I, p. 30.

²² *Briefwechsel* I, pp. 31–33; *Correspondence*, pp. 3–4.

of unbelievably confident optimism or utter and hopeless despair, with apparently no middle ground. He always thanks Schönberg from the bottom of his heart for Schönberg's 'liebe' cards and is scathing about anyone who has in some way offended Schönberg (which was incredibly easy to do – often, one suspects, unintentionally),²³ a man given to exaggeration and excessive over-reaction: derisive and bitter, but at the same time religiously devoted to Schönberg and Mahler.

Webern's letters to Schönberg in the earlier years of the period under scrutiny here read as if they had been written by a child: chaotic, a tumble of disparate thoughts pouring out in no particular order, interrupting each other, backtracking and repeating. He begs Schönberg for advice about everything, seemingly unable or unwilling to make the smallest decision for himself, hounding Schönberg ('Was soll ich thun?') repeatedly, as a child might a parent. For several years nearly every sentence in his letters begins on a new line, so that paragraphs cannot be said to exist, with respect to either form or content, as his thoughts jump back and forth unpredictably between often unrelated subjects, as he jots down his thoughts. His sentences, which closely resemble actual speech, are incomplete, the beginning of a new thought often marked only by a line break (as if he were writing a poem or a dramatic monologue) and the text punctuated with dashes. Thus, while on the one hand the letter resembles a stream of consciousness, jumping from one idea (or insult) to another, on the other hand at times he uses poetic images that probably required some consideration before writing down. The result has more the appearance of a list than a letter, even though on occasion several sentences on successive lines do in fact relate to the same subject and thus to each other. He repeats himself endlessly, sometimes saying the same thing or asking the same question several times in the same letter, frequently repeating it almost exactly in successive letters, perhaps for weeks or months. He often remarks to Schönberg that he has told him this or that in a previous letter, without further comment. Certain things seem to burst out unexpectedly, almost as if beyond his control, in the middle of a discussion of something else. Foremost among these are his never-ending questions about Schönberg's plans and what he is currently working on – a sort of incessant nagging – and his constant requests that Schönberg write to him immediately, something that may be said three or four times

23 When interviewed by Hans Keller in 1967, Schönberg's pupil Roberto Gerhard said:

To me Schönberg was [...] rather terrifying. [...] He had to adopt a defensive attitude. When I say 'defensive' I mean of course 'aggressive'. [...] And you had to be very careful, because he was constantly on the watch-out for something which he might have felt he could not let pass, and you were always in danger of having your head bitten off.

In the same programme Schönberg's widow Gertrud said 'if somebody [...] did something he didn't like, he attacked *terribly*'. Hans Keller, 'Portrait of Schoenberg', interviews with Schönberg's contemporaries on BBC radio, 1967, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btlxxfXcXR0&app=desktop>>. Accessed on 18 October 2019.

in the course of a single letter, as if Webern's need to hear from his master is an irrepressible desire lying always just beneath the surface of his thoughts.

Webern's handwriting is very uneven: in some letters it is quite neat and easily readable (much more so than either Schönberg's or Berg's, both of which are consistently difficult to read), in others, particularly when he is upset about something, it is nearly illegible. His writing nearly always runs downhill, but at times of stress this is exaggerated. He expresses himself awkwardly and ungrammatically, in series of short and often incomplete sentences. His spelling reflects a regional dialect, and words and names are frequently misspelt (Jalowec, Cöniger, Schreck-er, Maeterlink, Klark). His punctuation is erratic: many full stops are omitted and commas may be replaced by dashes, and although he writes a large number of questions, these are only very seldom followed by a question mark. A particular habit is simply to state a fact, occasionally preceded by 'Dass', but more often not, – usually repeating something that Schönberg has told him – without any comment as to why he is mentioning it. This is something that others do as well, of course, but such a statement is customarily followed by an exclamation mark, which Webern seldom uses in these situations, though his letters are peppered with them elsewhere, often two or three at a time. This seems to correspond with his desire to know everything that Schönberg is doing and thinking and to show Schönberg, however clumsily, that he remembers everything Schönberg has told him. Because of this habit of just repeating something he has been told, we can know many of the things Schönberg has said to him in letters that no longer exist.

There is nearly always more text – often quite a lot more – tacked on after the closing and signature of a letter, another indication of a lack of organisation and forethought. This frequently entails a second closing formula and signature, and in Webern's case this is no small matter, as his closing formulae in letters to Schönberg tend to be very lengthy.

Although Webern goes over the top in his thanks to Schönberg for his letters, he often also complains that they are so short, or that he has been waiting for one for so long. He himself writes to Schönberg very frequently, often every day or every second day, whether or not he has anything to say. He is also for ever insisting on absolute secrecy (about all sorts of things, usually without any apparent reason).

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Schönberg, the mentor, was not much of a letter writer. He was also a very bitter man, but without Webern's wild enthusiasms for the things he loved. He wasted no time on niceties. He was quite cavalier about keeping in touch with his friends and former pupils, who obviously depended on his letters, though he was very de-

manding that they should keep in touch with him and upbraided them when they didn't write as often as he thought they should. Unfortunately, since most of his letters to Berg from these years survive, while almost none of those to Webern do, our knowledge of how he wrote to his two star pupils is very one-sided. He very seldom wrote a letter to Berg just to keep in touch or to inquire after the health of Berg and Helene or to ask what they had been up to. On the rare occasion when a letter ventured into something of a more personal nature, it was about himself, not about them. He wrote a letter because he wanted something, and he insisted on knowing the details of Berg's success in raising money or doing other work for him. The tone of these letters, like – from all reports – his manner personally,²⁴ was peremptory and autocratic. And as the things he asked for were seldom done to his satisfaction, many of his letters are complaints, expressions of displeasure and irritation. Occasionally he asks Berg why he isn't doing any composing, when it is quite obvious that Berg couldn't possibly find the time to compose because he is being kept frantically busy with jobs that Schönberg demands of him. In his letters to Berg he occasionally shows a dry humour or indulges in wordplay, things one has to suppose would not have been in his letters to Webern, who seems not to have had a sense for such things. Like Webern, Schönberg was, at least until 1918, always unhappy in whatever place he happened to be in at the moment. This is a marked characteristic of both men, though Webern, unlike Schönberg, on occasion says something good about the place he was in previously, about which he had of course had nothing good to say when he was actually there.

Schönberg, the writer of abrupt and businesslike letters to his friends, criticised Berg for his style of letter-writing on at least two occasions, of course using his own letters as the model of perfection. On 28 November 1913 he wrote to Berg:

be more concise. You always write so many excuses, parenthetical asides, 'developments', 'elaborations' and stylisations that it takes a long time to figure out what you're driving at. I think one should work on oneself in such matters, too. A letter must be kept in telegram style and a telegram indeed must be of absolutely telegraphic brevity.²⁵

And two years later, on 8 April 1915:

Thus, please: plentiful, factually detailed information. One sentence on each matter, clear and precise and without regard to style, but thoroughly annotated, so I know where I stand. And without forgetting anything! Surely by now you must have learned from my letters how to handle such matters!²⁶

²⁴ See memories of Schönberg from people in the Schönberg circle in Chapter 2.

²⁵ *Briefwechsel* I, p. 457; *Correspondence*, p. 196.

²⁶ *Briefwechsel* I, p. 546; *Correspondence*, p. 233.



Reading Schönberg's surviving letters to his pupils it is rather difficult to understand the almost fanatical devotion they felt for him.²⁷ It is of course possible – and, from the evidence of Webern's responses, very likely – that he wrote to Webern in a quite different way than he did to Berg. He obviously favoured Webern over Berg personally. It is easy to imagine that this had something to do with size – both Schönberg and Webern were quite short, and Berg was very tall – and, in spite of the fact that he had originally taken Berg on as a pupil for no payment because he couldn't afford lessons, Schönberg also seems always to have thought that Berg was wealthy, though this was not the case, and Schönberg despised wealthy people. Helene's family was well off, but it is clear that her money was tied up in such a way that she couldn't get at it. And it is very tempting to wonder if Schönberg, almost certainly unconsciously, also saw Berg as a more likely competitor, musically as well as socially – the combination of his description in 1910 of Berg as 'an extraordinarily gifted composer'²⁸ and his lukewarm reception of *Wozzeck* when it was a big success in the 1920s²⁹ would seem to support this – whereas Webern was infinitely adoring and constantly seeking advice, which would have fed Schönberg's insatiable ego and probably made him feel rather protective: a father's feeling for a needy child. Webern was given the right to address Schönberg with the familiar Du in March 1912; Berg had to wait for another six years, until the last week of June 1918, for a similar invitation.



In the years we are concerned with all three men signed letters with their last names only, on rare occasions including their first names, but none ever used his first name alone. Later, as their friendship matured and their identification as something besides Schönberg's protégés grew, we find 'Lieber Toni' and 'Lieber Alban' often taking the place of 'Lieber Freund' in the letters of Berg and Webern, and Berg starts signing with his first name alone as well, though Webern appears never to have done this.³⁰ Schönberg signed his letters 'Schönberg' even

27 When interviewed by Keller, Egon Wellesz, speaking of Webern's and Berg's submission to Schönberg, said: 'In England I think it would be quite impossible to act like these grown-up people did, rather a little ridiculous.' Keller, *op. cit.*

28 *Arnold Schoenberg Letters*, ed. Erwin Stein, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (London: Faber & Faber, 1964), p. 23.

29 In his letter to Berg quoted in note 71 on page 46 below.

30 Only once, on 11 May 1938, after Schönberg had moved to America, did Webern use the greeting 'Liebster Arnold', and this same one and only letter was signed 'Sei umarmt von Deinem alten Anton' (Be embraced by your old friend Anton.)

when writing to his brother-in-law, Alexander Zemlinsky, who always signed his letters to Schönberg 'Alex'. Zemlinsky chided him about this in 1911,³¹ but to no avail. Schönberg's salutation in letters to Zemlinsky was 'Lieber Alex', and the two used the familiar form of address with each other, but he continued to sign his letters to Zemlinsky 'Arnold Schönberg' (reminiscent of Homer Simpson's signing a Valentine to his wife 'Homer J. Simpson'), or the more informal 'Schönberg' alone, occasionally preceded by 'Dein'. Although the absence of his letters to Webern from the years 1906 to 1921 makes it impossible to know how these were signed, several letters from later years survive, and here the signature is, again, either 'Schönberg' or 'Arnold Schönberg', though nearly always with 'Dein'.

The differences in the salutations and the various closing formulae used offer an insight into the characters of the three men and their feelings for each other. The simplest and least personal forms to be used by the three were, of course, those used by Schönberg. Although it is impossible to know for certain what form of salutation Schönberg used in his letters to Webern in these years, one can make fairly certain assumptions. On 31 August 1918, in a letter of considerable frustration with Webern,³² the salutation was 'Lieber Webern', but on 1 November of the same year, after normal relations had been resumed, Schönberg addressed Webern as 'Liebster Freund', which, with a very few exceptions was the form used from that time on.

In contrast, we know how Schönberg opened and closed his letters to Berg throughout these years. In his earliest letters to Berg he addressed him as 'Lieber Herr Berg' (on one occasion 'L.H.B.') or 'Lieber Berg'. Twice, on 18 and 30 September 1909, this became 'Lieber Freund', but he then immediately reverted to 'Lieber Berg' until 27 September 1911, when 'Berg' was again replaced with 'Freund'. One or other of these two greetings was then used for the remainder of the period we are concerned with here. On 8 September 1920, more than two years after he had invited Berg to use the familiar form of address, Schönberg began a letter to Berg with the greeting 'Liebster Freund'. This is used only once more, on 9 August 1921, with all other letters from September 1920 onwards using 'Lieber Freund'.

Schönberg's closing formulae were, predictably, short and to the point. In his earliest letters to Berg he used 'Besten Gruß' and 'Herzl. Gruß', or even simply 'Gruß', only very occasionally expanding this to 'Viele herzliche Grüße'. On 25 August 1911 he included both wives in his closing – 'Viele herzliche Grüße auch an Ihre Frau, auch von meiner Frau', and something of the sort appeared occa-

³¹ In Zemlinsky's letter to Schönberg dated 9 September, when they had been writing to each other already for ten years: 'you still sign yourself Schönberg and not Arnold'. *Alexander Zemlinsky: Briefwechsel mit Arnold Schönberg, Anton Webern, Alban Berg und Franz Schreker*, ed. Horst Weber, Briefwechsel der Wiener Schule 1 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), p. 62.

³² Events surrounding these letters are discussed on pages 471–76.

sionally thereafter, though by no means in the majority of cases. On 6 December 1920 he closed (quite extravagantly for him) with 'Viele viele herzliche Grüße an euch alle'. In the beginning he signed his letters to Berg simply 'Schönberg'. On 3 February 1909 there was no closing, but the signature was for the first time 'Ihr Arnold Schönberg'. This signature, but following a brief closing, occurred sporadically then until 18 August 1911, at which point it began to be used in the majority of cases, though the simple signature 'Schönberg' still occurred at times. In spite of the fact that he asked Berg to use the familiar Du in 1918, he continued to sign his letters to him 'Schönberg' or 'Arnold Schönberg' (rather than including the 'Dein' that would be expected) until September of 1920.

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The extreme opposite of Schönberg's brevity is seen in Webern, who goes over the top in both his salutations and his closing formulae, particularly the latter. His first letter to Schönberg, dated 29 July 1906, opens with 'Sehr geehrter Herr Schönberg!'. This greeting is used once more, in 1908, but after that he settled into 'Lieber Herr Schönberg' until 6 March 1912, when his address was 'Liebster verehrtester Freund', to be followed the next day with 'Liebster, so unendlich verehrter Freund'.³³ Similarly adulatory salutations – 'Liebster, verehrtester Freund', 'Liebster, teuerster Freund', 'Liebster, treuerster Freund' – pop up on occasion thereafter, but his usual form from this time onwards is 'Liebster Freund'.

His closing formulae in letters to Schönberg were predictably deferential and sometimes extravagant. Nearly all of his letters to Schönberg during these years close with an expression of his personal devotion – in its purest form 'Ihnen ergeben / Webern', becoming 'Dein Dir ergebener Webern' in March 1912, when Schönberg offered him the familiar form of address – but always, through 1914, including some form of 'ergeben' (devoted), usually embellished with one or more adverbs that indicate an even stronger attachment. Although he retained this sort of closing on occasion throughout the remainder of the period we are concerned with, from about 1915 the most important word in his signing off changed from 'ergeben' to 'innigst': sometimes a simple 'Innigst Dein Webern', but at other times expanding – 'Sei vielmals und innigst begrüßt von Deinem Webern', 'Es begrüßt Dich innigst und vielmals Dein Webern', 'Sei innigst u. 1000 mal begrüßt von Deinem Webern', 'Es denkt ununterbrochen in innigster Liebe an Dich Dein Webern'. And occasionally a mixture of both his favoured forms: 'Sei innigst und vielmals begrüßt von Deinem Dir gänzlich ergebenen Webern', 'Innigst und vielmals in hoher Freude und Dir ganz und gar ergeben begrüßt Dich Dein Webern'.

33 Schönberg had just offered Webern the familiar form of address. (See page 140.)

In 1907 he began on occasion to send best wishes also to Schönberg's wife, and from 1909 the children were sometimes included as well. On 19 February 1911, three days before Webern's own marriage, he signed off with 'Ich erlaube mir, Sie auch von meiner Frau zu grüßen und verbleibe Ihr Ihnen ganz ergebener Webern'. Eventually, as the Weberns had their own children, the closing formula nearly always included both wives and the children of both families, who were sometimes named individually, thus turning the closing into quite a lengthy affair, and whenever Webern's father or sister was visiting, there were greetings from them as well, and to Schönberg's mother-in-law whenever she was visiting the Schönbergs.

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Berg's salutations and closings in letters to Schönberg are much more restrained than Webern's. The salutation most often does not open a letter but occurs somewhere in the middle of the opening sentence, as would happen in speech. These references begin with 'lieber', often followed by 'verehrter' or perhaps 'guter', and until Berg was granted permission to use the familiar form in 1918 Schönberg was always addressed as 'Herr Schönberg'. On 18 July 1911 we read for the first time the superlative: 'lieber, verehrtester Herr Schönberg', and on 6 January 1915, 'Liebster Herr Schönberg'. On 24 June 1918, after finally having been offered the familiar form of address, Berg for the first time addressed Schönberg as 'Freund' rather than 'Herr Schönberg'. But this new familiarity did not change his mode of address otherwise in the way that it did in Webern's case: although 'liebster Freund' does occur after this, the superlative is frequently absent. His closing formulae are much less effusive than those of Webern, and he signs his letters either 'Alban Berg' or just 'Berg'.

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In their letters to each other Berg and Webern began, as one would expect, by addressing each other as 'Lieber Webern' and 'Lieber Berg', interrupted only by Webern's addressing Berg, on 8 November 1911, as 'Lieber Freund' and Berg's responding on 10 November with 'mein Lieber' (Berg had already addressed Webern simply as 'Lieber' in a letter that has been dated 13 September 1911). This familiarity, however, did not catch on immediately, and 'Lieber Berg' and 'Lieber Webern' continued, interrupted only occasionally by 'Lieber Freund' from Webern and 'mein Lieber' from Berg, though Berg went further in a letter that has been dated 24 February 1912, with 'mein bester Freund', and Webern addressed Berg on 7 March 1912 as 'Liebster Freund'. By 10 April 1912 'Lieber Freund' and

‘mein Lieber’ had become the usual greetings, with ‘Lieber, guter Freund’ and ‘mein bester Freund’ cropping up occasionally, and even ‘Liebster Freund’ issuing three times in letters from Webern, and once from Berg, who also used ‘mein Liebster’ or ‘mein liebster Freund’ three times in closing. After their marriages, both men usually included their wives in their closings, and throughout their correspondence they signed their letters ‘Dein Berg’ and ‘Dein Webern’. The closing formulae were affectionate but brief – in pronounced contrast to Webern’s closing formulae in his letters to Schönberg – and often, when they were going to see each other in the foreseeable future, consisted only of ‘Auf Wiedersehen’.

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In the period we are concerned with here, with a single exception in 1921, none of the three men ever referred to either his own or anyone else’s wife by name, though the wives of both Berg and Webern were often mentioned in letters, and the wives of both the writer and the receiver of a letter were often included in the closing formula, particularly in Webern’s letters to Schönberg.

In the majority of letters from these years Berg does not include his greeting to Schönberg’s wife, though there is sometimes a greeting to her from Helene. He first mentions Schönberg’s wife in a letter dated 17 September 1911, as ‘Ihre Frau Gemahlin’ and in the 29 further letters to Schönberg that year refers to her six more times, usually as ‘Ihre verehrte Frau Gemahlin’ or ‘Ihre werthe Frau Gemahlin’. In the years following until 1916, when normal correspondence between the two men virtually ceased, he continues to include Schönberg’s wife and children in his closing formulae fairly frequently, but by no means in the majority of his letters, which in these years were mainly about business that he was doing for Schönberg: raising money, making piano reductions, reading proofs and various other activities. When he referred to Schönberg’s wife he occasionally used a heightened form: ‘Ihre hochverehrte Frau Gemahlin’, ‘Ihre sehr verehrte Frau Gemahlin’, ‘Ihre sehr geehrte Frau Gemahlin’, and on 16 August 1913 ‘Ihre liebe Frau’. In a letter dated 14–18 August 1920 Helene adds ‘Grüße mir oftmals Mathilde’ and ‘Euch beiden alles Liebe von Helene’. It is interesting to note that, while the men did not use their wives’ first names, Helene Berg and Mathilde Schönberg occasionally wrote to each other, and in these letters both their first names were always used. However, they both also wrote to the other’s husband on occasion, and here only the woman’s first name is used, not the man’s. Although Helene Berg and Mathilde Schönberg seem to have been well acquainted and carried on an active correspondence, the letters of Wilhelmine Webern to both of these women seem to have been infrequent and formal; while her husband was addressing Berg and Schönberg with the familiar ‘Du’, Wilhelmine used the

formal address with their wives (though after the years covered here she seems to have had a less formal relationship with Helene Berg). There is one letter from the Bergs to Mathilde, written on 22 April 1922 after learning of her sister's death, signed 'Helene and Alban Berg'. Schönberg included Helene Nahowski ('Ihre Braut') in his best wishes to Berg on 24 July 1910, nearly ten months before their marriage. In a total of 169 surviving letters and cards to Berg in the years 1911 to 1921 (many of the cards being from a group of people) Schönberg sent his greetings to Berg's wife only 30 times, first as 'Ihre Frau', changing to 'Deine Frau' in 1920 when he had offered Berg the 'Du', and on a card from Schönberg and several others on 7 August 1921, he wrote 'Viele Grüße an Helene'.³⁴

In the letters of all three men children or other family members were either mentioned by name or simply referred to as 'die Deinen', 'die Kinder' or 'die Familie'.

34 *Briefwechsel* II, p. 140. From a personal letter to Helene, we gather that they addressed each other with the familiar 'Du' around the beginning of November 1920. (See Schönberg's letter to Helene of 3 November, 1920. *Ibid.*, p. 70.)

2 ARNOLD SCHÖNBERG

I stood alone, against a world of enemies.

— Arnold Schönberg³⁵

Arnold Schönberg had a colossal ego. He was quoted by one of the performers who played in many of the concerts given by his Verein für musikalische Privat-aufführungen as saying that he wasn't bothered by the rejection of his music in his lifetime because he was afraid that posterity would do him just as much harm by overrating him as the present did by underrating him.³⁶ He saw himself as vastly superior to other men and as a consequence had no compunction about making huge and constant demands, both musical and personal, of those around him – especially his pupils and former pupils – and was incredibly vitriolic about most of the rest of humanity.³⁷ Lorna Truding, a pianist who studied with him at the Schwarzwald School seminar³⁸ and who also played in concerts of the Verein, recalled her discomfort at what seemed to her to be the basis of his friendships: 'If any composer recognised Schönberg as a great musician and composer, this composer, even if Schönberg wouldn't think highly of him, would become a great friend of Schönberg.'³⁹

Felix Greissle, a pupil and later Schönberg's son-in-law, when asked if Schönberg had many friends, answered: 'Not friends! [...] Schönberg had dropped a lot of people. [...] – it was very difficult to be together with him; he was very demanding, and most people were not ... fit'.⁴⁰ Rudolf Kolisch, when asked the same

35 Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), p. 41.

36 Eugene Lehner, violist in the Kolisch Quartet, interviewed in Joan Allen Smith, *Schoenberg and his Circle. A Viennese Portrait* (London: Collier Macmillan, 1986), p. 73. Schönberg's remark was, of course, specious, as he was fierce and unrelenting in his hatred of the Viennese cultural community for not giving him and his music the respect he thought his due.

37 The man his pupil Erwin Stein describes much later as 'a man who can be good-humoured and kind, a loyal friend who is always ready to help' (*Arnold Schoenberg Letters*, ed. Erwin Stein, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (London: Faber & Faber, 1964), p. 7) does not shine forth from Schönberg's letters in the earlier years we are concerned with here.

38 Eugenie Schwarzwald (1872–1940) was an educational reformer who invited many artists and literati to give seminars in her school, the Schwarzwaldschen Schulanstalten, where her intention was to give girls a cultural education that was equal to that boys might receive elsewhere. Schönberg gave a course in harmony and counterpoint at the Schwarzwald school in 1903. <<https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/schwarzwald-eugenie>>. Accessed on 18 October 2019.

39 Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

question, said ‘No, he was just dominating’.⁴¹ When asked whether Schönberg had encouraged him to form the Kolisch Quartet, his answer was, ‘more than encouraged. One could say that he gave me the order, you know, to form an ensemble which was needed for the performance of this music.’⁴² Marcel Dick, violist with the Wiener Quartet and the Kolisch Quartet from 1922 to 1927, recalled that ‘Schönberg talked and you listened. There was no conversation on an equal level’ and that this included his relationship with Berg and Webern as well.⁴³ And Paul Pisk, another pupil and a member of Schönberg’s Verein, said ‘you can’t imagine how wearing it was for a normal human being to be with Schönberg. Schönberg was [...] tyrannical. He didn’t allow any opposition.’⁴⁴

Stefan Askenase, a pianist who was a pupil of Emil von Sauer at the Music Academy in Vienna, recalled learning a piece to be played at a Verein concert in 1919.

When I had learned the piece, Steuermann came to my student’s lodgings to hear it. He found it quite good, gave me a few advices. About a week later he came again for a second hearing, this time accompanied by Alban Berg and all went well. A few days before the concert there was a third and final audition and I had to play it for Schönberg in the house of one of his disciples. [...] / After one of the movements Schönberg made a witty remark, unhappily I do not remember what it was: anyhow, I smiled. And this smile of mine made him furious. He said in a very disagreeable tone that I was arrogant, that I had no right to laugh at him and some more similar things. I had been rather shy and most respectful with him; meeting Schönberg and playing for him was an event for me. Very surprised and shocked, I got up and went away without a word. / [...] He was suspicious of hostility with every person whom he met. [...] / [...] I confess, I never had the wish of meeting him again and I never met him since.⁴⁵

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There was no question in Schönberg’s mind that he was the best teacher of composition to be had and that anything good that came from any of his pupils was the result of his teaching. On 5 January 1910, when he was trying, without much success, to achieve a position at the Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna, he wrote to Emil Hertzka, the Managing Director of Universal Edition, proposing a concert of music of two of his pupils, Alban Berg and Erwin Stein. He began by being insulting about the President and the Director of the Academy

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 146. (Kolisch was Schönberg’s brother-in-law from 1924.)

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 146, 147.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 90–91.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 94–95.

(not a good way of ingratiating oneself, one might think). He wrote: 'If the two gentlemen responsible for the ruination of the Academy would be invited and could thoroughly be worked on to make them hear what more gifted and intelligent people notice for themselves – perhaps something can be done after all' and says that they should be made to realise who he is and what a teacher the Academy would be depriving itself of, how 'unintelligent' it would be of them to take on someone else when he was available. He goes on to describe the work of two of his pupils as altogether the result of their having studied with him. Of Berg, who he admits is 'an extraordinarily gifted composer', he says:

But the state he was in when he came to me was such that his imagination apparently could not compose anything but Lieder. [...] It was absolutely impossible for him to write an instrumental movement or an instrumental theme. You can hardly imagine the lengths I went to in order to remove this lack of talent. As a rule teachers absolutely don't succeed in doing this, because they do not even realise where the problem lies.

Of Stein, who in Schönberg's opinion is 'only an imaginative, gifted musician', but 'scarcely has the makings of a real composer', he says, 'the fact that I could get him to write anything as good as the Rondo or the Andante that I should like to have performed I consider as a brilliant testimony to my teaching'.⁴⁶

In his letter of application for an appointment as a private lecturer in composition at the Academy on 19 March 1910 Schönberg says that, although he doesn't teach his pupils a style, 'it will not be possible to prevent the young and gifted from emulating my style. For in ten years every talented composer will be writing this way; regardless of whether he has learnt it directly from me or only from my works.' He then says that he has no wish to become a martyr, but that he is bound to become one if he is not hired.⁴⁷

In 1949 Schönberg wrote a reminiscence of his pupil Berg and the opera *Wozzeck* which, while it is essentially complimentary, one cannot read without noting Schönberg's assumption of his own importance in Berg's success.

When Alban Berg came to me in 1904, he was a very tall youngster and extremely timid. But when I saw the compositions he showed me – songs in a style between Hugo Wolf and Brahms – I recognized at once that he had real talent. Consequently I accepted him as pupil, though at this time he was unable to pay my fee. Later his mother inherited a great fortune and told Alban, as they now had money, he could enter the conservatory. I was told that Alban was so upset by this assumption that he started to weep and could not stop weeping before his

⁴⁶ Stein, *op. cit.*, pp. 23–24.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

mother had allowed him to continue with me. / [...] / He succeeded. *Wozzeck* was one of the greatest successes of opera. / And why? Because Berg, this timid man, was a strong character who was faithful to his ideas, just as he was faithful to me when he was almost forced to discontinue studying with me. / He succeeded with the opera as he succeeded in his insistence to study with me.⁴⁸

The ‘great fortune’ was not that great, and one can’t help wondering about all the weeping. But it is obvious that his having been allowed to continue his lessons with Schönberg was to be seen as an important factor in the success of Berg’s opera.

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Schönberg always insisted on being recognised as first and best, even in small things. The sentence ‘You are quite wrong’ comes up again and again in his letters. In Keller’s interviews for the BBC Ernst Krenek said ‘He seemed to know everything. When he started taking lessons in tennis, after the first lesson he would start instructing the instructor.’ This in spite of the fact that, according to Roberto Gerhard, interviewed on the same programme, Schönberg played tennis ‘very badly’.⁴⁹ Clara Steuermann related her husband’s having received an angry rebuke from Schönberg that reminds one of Captain Mainwaring’s frequent ‘I wondered how long it would take you to think of that’ whenever someone in his platoon had a useful idea.⁵⁰

My husband told me that when the first performances of *Gurrelieder* were being prepared and a whole group of them travelled together, [...] at one of the rehearsals – they were having difficulty at the time because this chorus in the last part, the voices were not finding their pitches. And [...] Schönberg was sort of thinking out loud and said, ‘I wonder what I could do, what instrument I could use to reinforce the voices to help them to find their pitches’. And Steuermann, who was then a very young man, and who had not been with Schönberg very long, sort of said under his breath ‘harp’, because it occurred to him that after all the harp has a sort of indeterminate quality and would blend with the voices. Whereupon, Schönberg turned around and said, ‘Why did you say that? How did you think of that? How did you know what was in my mind?’⁵¹

⁴⁸ ‘Alban Berg (1)’, in Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, p. 474.

⁴⁹ Hans Keller, ‘Portrait of Schoenberg’, interviews with Schönberg’s contemporaries on BBC radio, 1967, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btLxxfXcXR0&app=desktop>>. Accessed 18 October 2019.

⁵⁰ A character played by Arthur Lowe in *Dad’s Army*, a British television series about the Home Guard of a fictional Walmington on Sea.

⁵¹ Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 208–09.

Schönberg was not kind in his reminiscences of his best pupils, always anxious to make it clear that his teaching was the reason for their successes and that all the innovative ideas had been his originally, even making notes of instances when he thought his pupils had copied him or failed to give him proper credit. Stuckenschmidt gives one such note, giving the date only as 'after 1910'. It reads:

Webern

- 1) has confessed: Coloratura-singing without text
- 2) has forgotten, that in the monodrama harmonics cover the entire page
- 3) has: at once made orchestral pieces 'short piece, just a few bars'
- 4) has immediately imitated: heterogeneously placed chords
- 5) Chamber Symph. second theme
- 6) early chords from Sextet Pelleas Quartet etc.
7. [sic] has provided a piece with a date, which is absolutely wrong and lies before the time in which such things were written. Has replied to my remonstrances: that is an error⁵²

Stuckenschmidt tells us also of a 'memorial' concerning Webern that Schönberg wrote in 1940, long after he had moved to the United States but five years before Webern's death.

1906: Webern returned from vacation, sees chamber symphony [...], says he had thought about how modern music should look. He sees chamber symphony fulfils that idea. Chamber symphony still influenced by Strauss's *Salome*. – 1907 new style. Told Webern about short pieces. One of the piano pieces should consist of only three to four measures. – Webern starts writing shorter and shorter pieces – follows all my developments. Always tries to surpass everything (exaggerates). 1914 (5) [sic] I start a symphony, wrote about it to Webern – mention: singing *without words* (*Jacob's Ladder*) – mention: Scherzo theme including all twelve tones. / After 1915: Webern seems to have used twelve tones in some of his compositions – *without telling me*. / From 1910–1921. I was always thinking of replacing the structural effects of the harmony. / Several attempts: (a) using the 'tones' of the beginning of a theme for new themes, (b) *Jacob's Ladder*: main themes build from a row of six tones, etc. / 1921 found out that the greater distance between a tone and its repetition can be produced if twelve notes lay between.⁵³ Started twelve-note composition. Told Erwin Stein. I had now a way I wanted to keep all my imitators at a distance because I am annoyed by them: I even do not know

⁵² A photograph of this note appears in H.H. Stuckenschmidt, *Arnold Schoenberg. His Life, World and Work*, trans. Humphrey Searle (London: John Calder, 1977), p. 538.

⁵³ Schönberg's writing in English was always very awkward. This of course should be 'the greatest distance' rather than 'the greater distance', and this statement doesn't make sense anyway: it should read 'eleven tones lay between'.

any more what is mine and what is theirs. – Webern jealous about Berg, had suggested me to tell Berg he (in about 1908 or 9) should not write in the new style – he has no right to do it – it does not fit to his style – but it fitted to Webern’s!!! / Webern committed at this period (1908–1918) many acts of infidelity with the intention of making himself the innovator.⁵⁴

To this Schönberg added a postscript in German on 10 August:

One may be surprised to find so many lines directed against Webern. It looks awful and throws a bad light on me, especially if one compares Webern’s letters to me with these. I must unfortunately say, while Webern – in spite of Hitler – shows an admirable attitude towards myself, that his position then was very wavering. However, he has wavered back to me and this shows that he was always stirred up against me by a third party, though this could not destroy his love for me. It would fill me with deep sorrow if I had to think otherwise.⁵⁵

And later, in 1951 (after Webern’s death), he wrote of Webern again:

Dorian-Deutsch studied with Webern, and recently, when he visited me, he told how Webern was the first to write *Klangfarbenmelodien*, and that I then used this at the end of the *Harmonielehre*. / Anyone who knows me at all knows that this is not true. It is known that I should not have hesitated to name Webern, had his music stimulated me to invent this expression. One thing is certain: even had it been Webern’s idea, he would not have told it to me. He kept secret everything ‘new’ he had tried in his compositions. I, on the other hand, immediately and exhaustively explained to him each of my new ideas (with the exception of the method of composition with twelve tones – that I long kept secret, because, as I said to Erwin Stein, Webern immediately uses everything I do, plan or say, so that – I remember my words – ‘By now I haven’t the slightest idea who I am.’).⁵⁶

Webern, who was in fact the most artlessly devoted of his disciples, certainly did not deserve this sort of treatment after 36 years of unwavering loyalty: a man whom Schönberg himself had described three years earlier as ‘the very spiritual leader of the group, a very Hotspur in his principles, a real fighter, a friend whose faithfulness can never be surpassed, a real genius as a composer’.⁵⁷

Schönberg was also very anxious to establish his precedence over both Josef Matthias Hauer and Fritz Heinrich Klein, two men whom he apparently saw as pos-

⁵⁴ Stuckenschmidt, *op. cit.*, pp. 442–43.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 444. Who the ‘third party’ might be is not mentioned, nor does Stuckenschmidt speculate.

⁵⁶ ‘Anton Webern: *Klangfarbenmelodie*’, in Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), p. 484. Schönberg then proceeds to criticise Webern for copying various others of his ideas.

⁵⁷ ‘How One becomes Lonely’ (1937). *Ibid.*, p. 41.

sible threats. From Hauer, who was the same age as Webern, Schönberg got as good as he gave, since, after an initial interest, neither man had any time for the other or his ideas. The same was not the case, however, with the younger Klein, who was a pupil of Berg. Continuing his bad-tempered denunciation of various other composers, which began with Webern, Schönberg says of Klein's composition *Die Maschine*:

About 1919 or 1920 Berg brought me a composition of Klein. I think it was called 'Musical Machine' and dealt with twelve tones. I did not pay much attention to it. It did not impress me as music and probably I was still unconscious of where to my own attempts might lead me. So forgot entirely having seen something in twelve tones.⁵⁸

Klein's piece was entered in a competition held by the Verein in 1921 in which works had to be submitted under a pseudonym in order to ensure a fair reading by the judges: Schönberg, Berg, Webern, Stein and Steuermann. Klein's pseudonym was 'Heautontimorumenus'.⁵⁹ It is hard to know whether the piece was submitted with tongue in cheek (as the pseudonym would suggest) or as a serious exploration of various techniques of twentieth-century composition, which were listed on the title page and included, among other things, a twelve-beat rhythmic theme, a twelve-note theme, the octatonic scale, mirror symmetry and a 'Motherchord' containing all twelve pitches and all twelve intervals. It is also impossible to know whether Berg knew that the piece was from one of his own pupils, but in any case he described it to Schönberg as 'very interesting', and it was declared the winner. The copy of the score that was in Schönberg's library contains the following inscription: 'It is the same Machine that found itself (as a score for chamber orchestra) in your beloved hands in the summer of 1921, on the occasion of the competition of the Verein f. m. P. ...'. Beneath this inscription Schönberg has written a typically ungracious message of his own:

Not correct. In Webern's hands, who told me about it but was not able to interest me in it. I doubt that I had this in my hands, but even more that I looked at it, and certainly that I knew what it represented. / In any case he has fundamentally nothing in common with twelve-note composition [...]⁶⁰

The success of his pupil Berg's *Wozzeck* must have been hard for Schönberg to swallow. He had not himself written an opera yet, and his two stage works, *Erwartung* and *Die glückliche Hand*, had yet to be performed. When they were, a few

⁵⁸ Stuckenschmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 443.

⁵⁹ *The Self-tormentor*, a play written by the Roman dramatist Terence, perhaps by way of Baudelaire (in his poem *Les fleurs du mal*).

⁶⁰ Bryan R. Simms, 'The Society for Private Musical Performances: Resources and Documents in Schoenberg's Legacy', *Journal of the Arnold Schönberg Institute* III/2 (October 1979), p. 135.

years later, they did not enjoy anything like the immediate success of *Wozzeck*. Although he had to recognise Berg's success, he tried on occasion to share in it – on Berg's fiftieth birthday Schönberg wrote: 'It is our common cause, we three stand and fall together,' and 'we have a share in your happiness; in every sense!'.⁶¹ In 1946 he wrote the following in *Style and Idea*:

Alban Berg, who was perhaps the least orthodox of us three – Webern, Berg and I – in his operas mixed pieces or parts of pieces of a distinct tonality with those which were distinctly non-tonal. He explained this, apologetically, by contending that as an opera composer he could not, for reasons of dramatic expression and characterisation, renounce the contrast furnished by a change from major to minor. / Though he was right as a composer, he was wrong theoretically. I have proved in my operas *Von Heute auf Morgen* and *Moses und Aron* that every expression and characterisation can be produced with the style of free dissonance.⁶²

Particularly interesting in this excerpt are his description of Berg's explanation as 'apologetic' and his final triumph in having 'proved' [*sic*] through his own (superior) works that Berg was wrong.

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That living with Schönberg was difficult has been verified by many. In 1901 he married Mathilde Zemlinsky, the sister of Alexander, a contemporary and close friend who gave Schönberg the only instruction he ever had in composition. They had two children, Gertrude, born in 1902, and Georg, born in 1906. Bojan Bujić tells us that friends saw Mathilde withdraw 'into herself more and more' after the birth of Georg.⁶³ Bujić kindly puts this down to post-natal depression, but there was at least one other reason for Mathilde's despondency in these years. In 1906 Schönberg befriended the young expressionist painter Richard Gerstl, and as a result Gerstl spent considerable time in the Schönbergs' home, summering with them in Gmunden on the Traunsee in the summers of 1907 and 1908. That Mathilde and Gerstl had become romantically involved was discovered by Schönberg in late August of 1908, whereupon Mathilde fled with Gerstl, leaving Schönberg and their two young children behind. In a matter of a few weeks Webern had persuaded Mathilde to return to Schönberg, and the affair came to a definitive conclusion when Gerstl committed suicide on 4 November. From that time on, visitors to the Schönberg house described Mathilde as sitting alone, silent and inactive. We are told by Raymond Coffey of Marya Freund's having written that

⁶¹ *Briefwechsel* II, p. 554; *Correspondence*, p. 462.

⁶² Addendum to 'Composition with Twelve Tones (1)', in Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, pp. 244–45.

⁶³ Bojan Bujić, *Arnold Schönberg* (London: Phaidon, 2011), p. 58.

‘Mathilde tolerated with indulgence and patience Schönberg’s trying originality in everyday life, and his authoritarian character made me understand the patience necessary for her, the wife, the mistress of the house, the mother of 2 children, to have in order to endure the misery’, and of the recollections of Josepha Wally, the Schönbergs’ maid during the first World War, who complained of the ‘negative, aggressive atmosphere in the Schönberg house, very turbulent with permanent quarrels’ and claimed that ‘Schönberg tyrannised the family’.⁶⁴

The Schönbergs’ daughter Gertrude married Felix Greissle in 1921. When Mathilde died in 1923, the Greissles moved in with Schönberg for a time. At that time Schönberg was smoking 60 cigarettes a day, drinking three litres of black coffee and a large amount of liquor and taking both codeine and pantopon, a purified and concentrated form of opium. The situation became impossible for the Greissles, who had a very young child, and they soon moved back to their own apartment. Greissle later said that living with Schönberg was ‘very, very difficult’, that they ‘had fights almost every day about really minor things’, and that one day it was just impossible to live with him any longer.⁶⁵

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Schönberg was a small man who obviously had some sort of charisma, though the nature of this is difficult to imagine when looking at pictures of him and reading his letters. In all the photographs and self-portraits from the years we are concerned with he effects a petulant scowl, though he seems to have learned how to smile in his American years, where he can be seen smiling in casual pictures with the children of his second family. In a notebook from 1937 he wrote,

I am small; I have short legs, I am bald having a central bald patch and a small (crown?) of dark hair around it. My nose is big and hooked, I have dark big eyes, big eye brows, my mouth is perhaps the best of me; I have usually my hands crossed on the back; my shoulders are round.⁶⁶

In 1908 Arnold Greissle-Schönberg described his grandfather as ‘not particularly attractive, being somewhat plump and short and prematurely bald’,⁶⁷ and Chris-

64 Marya Freund (1876–1966) was a soprano who sang in performances of *Gurrelieder* and other Schönberg works. Unfortunately, no source is given for either of these recollections, which can be found on <<http://www.richardgerstl.com/arnold-and-mathilde-schonberg>>. Accessed 18 October 2019.

65 Felix Greissle, interviewed by Hans Keller on the BBC on 4 November 1965, also quoted in Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

66 Stuckenschmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 543.

67 Arnold Greissle-Schönberg, <www.schoenbergseuropeanfamily.org>, chapter 2. Accessed 18 October 2019.

topher Hailey places him in a group that he says were ‘outsiders’ in Vienna.⁶⁸ In Keller’s programme on the BBC in 1967 five of the people interviewed mentioned his eyes. Hans Nachod, his cousin, said ‘I cannot forget his sparkling eyes when he was young. I never saw eyes like his again. He had the look of a magician or a hypnotist.’ Ernst Krenek: ‘Very characteristic, these piercing eyes, at the same time very fast-moving’. Felix Greissle said he had assumed from photographs that Schönberg was a tall man, but that he was ‘well below middle size, but of course everything was overpowered by the strong face and the unbelievable eyes, the most wonderful feature of him’. Roberto Gerhard: ‘I remember the face, an ascetic face, those burning eyes, serious, tense, unsmiling’. And Clara Steuermann: ‘a short man with very, very gleaming bright eyes’.⁶⁹

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It is well known that Schönberg had a superstitious belief in a sort of personal mystical influence attached to the number thirteen. He was born on 13 September 1874 and was convinced that he would die on the thirteenth of either June or July. (He died on 13 July 1951.) Schönberg’s grandson Arnold Greissle-Schönberg has written about the importance of superstition generally in both his own mother’s life and Schönberg’s.

Members of the Schönberg family have always taken this superstition and many others very seriously, often allowing their daily lives to be governed by such taboos. For instance, my mother, an otherwise intelligent, enlightened woman, simply remained at home on the thirteenth day of the month, and doing anything of any consequence on Friday the 13th was to be avoided at all costs. / [...] / A fear of the number thirteen haunted Schönberg for the rest of his life. Needless to say, he avoided the thirteenth day of the month like the plague; he would never buy the thirteenth ticket to a concert or the theater or sit in the thirteenth row. Whenever he had to prepare a list and there were more than twelve items on it, he replaced the number 13 with 12a. In that way, the sequence was not disturbed and the portentous number was avoided. / [...] / When it came to the title of his opera *Moses und Aron*, Schönberg was well aware, of course, that the name of Moses’ brother is written with a double A, and that was how he spelled it in the title originally. But then he counted the letters and, lo, there were thirteen of them – MOSES UND AARON – which could not be; something had to be done. He considered using another title but finally decided to remove one of

68 ‘Berg’s Worlds’, in *Alban Berg and his World*, ed. Christopher Hailey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 6.

69 Keller, *op. cit.*

the A's from 'Aaron', which would change only the spelling, not the pronunciation, and result in a title of twelve letters, a favorable omen. / [...] / Everyone in the *Kreis* was only too well aware of the Maestro's phobias. And so, in 1923, when he proclaimed his revolutionary new system for composing music, one of his 'apostles', who was not quite convinced that it was such a good idea (and who shall go nameless), privately joked that it was probably going to be thirteen tones, but the Maestro made it into twelve because of his superstition.⁷⁰

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Schönberg was not generous by nature. He no doubt felt that, as Master, he was being generous by giving his pupils advice and sharing his knowledge, and by allowing them to spend time with him – for instance in the summers, when, on holiday, he was usually accompanied by a gaggle of admiring pupils, though this constant adoration can be recognised also as a boost to his own ego. It is certainly the case that he tried to find opportunities to get the music of his pupils performed and – later – published, though that can also be seen as an opportunity to further his own reputation. He may even have considered that asking them to do work for him – especially such things as the making of piano reductions, which required some creative activity on their part to produce a work that would then bear both his name and theirs – was generosity. But spontaneous generosity seems not to have been in his nature.

He was neither a giver nor, at times, a gracious receiver of gifts. Both Webern and Berg gave him handsome gifts for his birthday and Christmas every year from their student days until at least the end of Berg's life in the mid 1930s, even when they could ill afford it, and usually he thanked them as one should, though seldom fulsomely, but on three occasions, his birthday in 1914 and 1916 and Christmas in 1931, his thank-you letters to Berg seem particularly lacking in grace. On the first occasion Berg had dedicated to Schönberg on his fortieth birthday his *Three Pieces for Orchestra* (op. 6), of which he had finished only two. These are very important works, but Schönberg's response was:

Many thanks for your birthday wishes and for the score. / Unfortunately I can't say anything to you about your work just yet. Although I have looked at it now and again, you yourself surely know how difficult it is to get an impression from such a complicated score and you will understand that I lack the peace of mind for it during this time. / Thus I confidently expect that the intention was as strong as the will and thank you for the deed. ———⁷¹

⁷⁰ Greissle-Schoenberg, *op. cit.*

⁷¹ *Briefwechsel I*, p. 500; *Correspondence*, p. 215. Schönberg's response to another work that was to become a stand-by in the twentieth-century repertoire was similarly ungracious. On 11 January 1926 he wrote:

For his birthday two years later Berg sent him a volume of Wagner's letters.⁷² Schönberg thanked him in a characteristically ambiguous way on 19 September 1916.

I want to thank you most sincerely for the lovely birthday gift. I would have thanked you long ago if only I had found the time, and if I hadn't hoped in the meantime to see you. Actually, I have little time for reading,⁷³ but have dipped into it now and again all the same. After all, once you have it, it's bound to arouse your interest, and besides, it's finally time I took to heart your repeated 'broad hints' about the beautiful letters other composers have written; whereas ... !!! / But no! Of course that's not meant seriously at all in this way! It's merely intended as a way to express my wonderment that you are always giving me biographies or correspondences (it's too stupid: all the rules of etiquette notwithstanding, I always look every gift horse in the mouth). I know what you have in mind is not that I should learn from these letters or anything like that. Rather just: you happen to like letters at the moment, so you assume it would be something for me as well. You think this in a different way: you read the book and know that

[...] we saw *Wozzeck* the day after we arrived. I got a very good impression of it. Can't say, of course, that I know the work in detail yet. But in any case I could recognise it and with repeated hearings (they say it's becoming a hit; that's what has been said in one of the newspapers!), I'll certainly be able to get a complete overview. Unfortunately the performance isn't particularly good. Not even the orchestra, which stumbles over many a phrase and many a difficulty. But the singers sing very little and exaggerate all the more. Temperament celebrating orgies. [This is very awkward in German as well; he seems to be using temperament as a synonym for emotion, meaning that all kinds of emotions are having orgies onstage; singers are overacting etc]. As regards the staging, I find the black and white sets extremely irritating. [...] Too bad I don't have the piano score here yet. I would have liked to check some things. [...] I'm not sure whether on first impression after the first hearing I'm justified in saying yet that I would like to discuss in detail with you some things which I don't find good. [...] Incidentally, the orchestra is often much too loud.

Briefwechsel II, p. 249; *Correspondence*, p. 342.

⁷² Probably *Richard Wagner. Briefe an Hans von Bülow* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1916), which was found in Schönberg's library after his death. Berg had apparently also given Schönberg several volumes of letters as gifts before this, though the only ones that have been identified are a five-volume edition of Beethoven's letters (Alfred Christlieb Kalischer's *Beethovens sämtliche Briefe. Kritische Ausgabe mit Erläuterungen* (Berlin and Leipzig: Schuster & Loeffler, 1906–08)) and a 1912 edition of Balzac's letters. *Briefwechsel* I, pp. 620–21, n. 1045.

⁷³ Julie Brown suggests that Schönberg 'was not always a close reader, or even much of a reader at all'; Julie Brown, *Schoenberg and Redemption* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 13. Schönberg himself admitted, in a footnote in the *Harmonielehre*, that he had not read some (unidentified) book 'from cover to cover – too dull an undertaking for me', and in a letter to Hugo Leichtentritt in 1938 he gave a list of books on music and wrote 'I am no "reader" and therefore actually know the following books only very superficially, and in most cases only certain sections, out of context' (Stein, *op. cit.*, p. 207). This sets him apart definitively from his two star pupils, both of whom were avid readers and as a result very well-read. It also makes one wonder how much of the voluminous reading material sent him hopefully by his former pupils he ever actually looked at.

it is lovely and now you'd like me to get to know this lovely thing, too. I know: something very kind, very cordial, is intended here. But what's the result of it: ultimately my library consists mainly of books that others have liked; that others have wanted for themselves and which I never, or only in the last instance, would have thought of myself; on the other hand, the ones I want are invariably missing: my library never takes on a character reflecting myself; (I'm not so concerned about that, but) it takes on a kind of hybrid character matching an all-round education.⁷⁴ / Surely you won't be angry with me for taking the opportunity to mention this. It's not meant unkindly. I just think it's better to tell you once so that it will stick in your mind in the future.⁷⁵

This letter would not seem to have been written by the same man as one written four years earlier, on 28 December 1912, in which Schönberg had said to Berg,

It is very gratifying to me that my friends go to such trouble to give me pleasure. That they rack their brains on my behalf until they find something that appeals to both their tastes and mine, and that they concern themselves so intensely with my interests is always something that moves me very deeply.⁷⁶

or one written on 27 December 1917, in which he says, after being given a six-volume edition of Poe's works,⁷⁷ 'I thank you very much for your inspired choice'.⁷⁸ (Perhaps by this time Berg had indeed learnt his lesson.)

In spite of these last two examples, Schönberg's attitude to gifts from Berg remained churlish for most of the rest of Berg's life. Many years later, at Christmas 1931, Berg sent Schönberg a full score of *Der Wein*, which had appeared in November, a history of the Jews in three volumes and a book about the Jesuits.⁷⁹ Although Schönberg did not acknowledge receipt of the gifts until 19 January – and then only after Berg had written on 16 January to say that he hoped Schönberg had received the things he had sent by now – he wrote then very flatteringly about *Der Wein*. On this occasion, after giving Berg's song his highest praise – 'I find the

74 According to the reminiscences of Schönberg by many of his contemporaries, an all-round education was something that he definitely lacked. A very interesting collection of such by Hans Keller can be found at <<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=btlxXfXcXR0>>. Accessed 18 October 2019.

75 *Briefwechsel* I, pp. 620–21; *Correspondence*, p. 265.

76 *Briefwechsel* I, p. 331; *Correspondence*, p. 137.

77 According to Hailey, in *op. cit.*, p. 105, this was *Edgar Poes Werke*, trans. Hedda Moeller-Bruck and Hedwig Lachmann (Minden: J.C.C. Brun, 1911–1915).

78 *Briefwechsel* I, p. 628; *Correspondence*, p. 267.

79 Probably the three-volume edition of Dr Heinrich Graetz's *Volkstümliche Geschichte der Juden*, first published in 1888 and Rene Fülöp-Miller's *Macht und Geheimnis der Jesuiten* (Leipzig: Grethlein & Co., 1929). *Briefwechsel* II, p. 462, n. 879, and p. 469, n. 886. Schönberg was at this time in the process of re-examining his Jewish heritage, which he was to espouse officially two years later.

arrangement and instrumental disposition of this score of such extraordinary clarity that I want to emphasise this impression as something quite exceptional. I really know very few modern scores (mine included) of which I could say the same.’ – he proceeds to the books and, although he is properly grateful for the book about the Jesuits, which he says ‘gives one a very vivid historical picture and I find that very valuable’, he cannot simply thank Berg for the history of the Jews but feels it necessary to tell him that he already owns it (information that there seems to be no particular reason to impart). This is an important letter, as he then goes on to try to explain why he never gives his friends gifts, but his explanation – justification? – seems a rather sad attempt to excuse self-absorption and lack of concern:

I very much regret that you give me such valuable gifts that I lack the talent and imagination to reciprocate. It must be because I am never in a position to give you or Webern Christmas or birthday gifts. For I’m certainly not shabby or stingy. I really do lack the talent for giving. My wife thinks so, too, and it is probably true. It annoys me but I can’t do anything about it. An illness for which there is no cure. For even given a larger income, nothing would occur to me that might – as I imagine it!! – give pleasure to someone else: and that is probably the reason!⁸⁰

One wonders why Schönberg was ‘never in a position to give’ his friends gifts. Certainly passing off what looks very much like a lack of interest in others as an ‘incurable illness’ seems a rather too easy and self-indulgent excuse for a simple lack of sensibility. (He says ‘you or Webern’, but he is dissembling here, as he has in fact given both Webern and his children several gifts over the years.) In fact, the regular exchange of gifts between the Schönberg and Webern families can be traced back to as early as Christmas 1913, and while Webern, of course, had always been in the habit of giving presents to Schönberg (as all of Schönberg’s pupils did), in this case the fact that, unlike Berg, both Webern and Schönberg had children facilitated this mutual exchange. The letters written around Christmas (letters have survived both from Webern to Schönberg, and from Minna Webern to Mathilde Schönberg) in the years from 1913 to 1921 show that Webern’s children usually received presents from Schönberg and his wife (mostly picture books or song books), and that the Webers gave gifts to Schönberg’s children in return. We learn from Webern’s letter to Schönberg of 19 December 1914, however, that Schönberg must have expressed his intention to give Webern one of his own works as a Christmas present, because Webern, overwhelmed, thanked him and, stating that he already had all the works that had been printed thus far, immediately specified what he would like to get (the ‘luxury edition’ (Prachtausgabe) or at least the ‘large score’ of *Pierrot*), and – not very subtly – inquired also when *Erwartung* and the newest publication of the

⁸⁰ This unusually long letter appears in *Briefwechsel* II, pp. 467–71, the material quoted on pp. 468–69. Most of the letter is in *Correspondence*, pp. 428–30.

Kammersymphonie would come out. Schönberg apparently fulfilled his wish entirely by sending all of the above, and in the following years gave Webern mostly musical scores (either his own or, albeit rarely, those of other composers like Zemlinsky), but additionally also other things that were hard to come by but would suit Webern's taste, especially tobacco, of which Webern was very fond.

Perhaps the most meaningful gift that a composer can give is the dedication of a work. Schönberg dedicated the song 'Alle, welche Dich suchen', op. 22 no. 2, to Webern when it first appeared, in *Zeit-Echo* in 1915, though this dedication was absent when the song was published on its own. Many years later, in 1937, Schönberg dedicated his violin concerto to Webern, but only after writing to him the following:

It is my intention to dedicate my violin concerto to you. Before I can put this dedication in print, however, I must put a question to you. / [...] / Is it true that you have become a supporter or a member of the Nazi party?⁸¹

Schönberg never dedicated a work to Berg, except for a canon written specifically to celebrate Berg's fiftieth birthday.

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In August 1911 the Schönbergs left Vienna very suddenly. The event that was the ostensible reason for their flight is described variously by biographers, but we take our account from the German edition of the Berg–Schönberg correspondence.⁸² In July and August 1911 there had been a series of heated confrontations between one of Schönberg's neighbours in the Hietzing house and other tenants, including Schönberg. The offending neighbour was an engineer named Philip Josef van Wouwermans. On 19 July Wouwermans forced his way into Schönberg's apartment, striking the maid, and 'grossly abusing' Schönberg, calling him, among other things, an 'immoral swine'.⁸³ (Wouwermans claimed that the 'indecent behaviour' of Schönberg's daughter Gertrude, who was nine years old at the time, was corrupting his two sons, aged five and eleven; Schönberg thought Wouwermans's older son the more likely culprit.) Schönberg was so worried that on 22 July he wrote to one of his pupils, Josef Polnauer, asking him to come to stay for a few days and bring a pistol.⁸⁴ A violent confrontation erupted on 4 August, when

⁸¹ From a letter of 20 June 1937.

⁸² *Briefwechsel* I, pp. 44–45, n. 60, and 57, n. 86; this event is discussed also in *Correspondence*, p. 7, n. 2, and p. 11, n. 1.

⁸³ *Correspondence* and *Briefwechsel* I differ slightly here: the (earlier) English edition claims that this occurred in a neighbour's apartment.

⁸⁴ Polnauer studied with Schönberg from 1909 to 1911 and with Berg from 1911 to 1913. He was Schönberg's assistant in his seminar at the Schwarzwald School and was very much involved later with the Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen. Polnauer was a large and burly man, and

Wouwermans tried to force his entry into the Schönbergs' apartment and Schönberg refused to open the door, threatening him with the pistol. As a result of this latest confrontation Wouwermans was given two weeks' notice to leave the building, whereupon he renewed his threats against Schönberg, whom he considered to have been principally responsible for his eviction (which Schönberg claimed was not the case). Schönberg and his family left Vienna immediately and went to the Starnbergersee, where the Zemlinskys were spending the summer.

Although the confrontation with Wouwermans was the immediate catalyst for Schönberg's departure from Vienna, it was by no means the only – or perhaps even the major – reason for the move. Schönberg was unhappy with Vienna's reception of his music and its perception of his personal worth, and he was still nursing a grudge for not having been given a Professorship at the Academy a year earlier. Instead, he had been invited to give private lessons there, which he then did – for a salary, which he refused. It is difficult to understand his refusal of payment as anything other than spite, since he was at this time already asking for (which might better be described as demanding) money from various people, including his friends and former pupils. He in fact continued for many years to depend on the charity of his friends and of 'patrons' who were vigorously sought and unremittingly pursued.⁸⁵ Completely confident of his own worth, he felt that it was the responsibility of the rest of the population to provide him with a handsome living, simply for being himself. Having some sort of permanent employment, as other men did, seems never to have occurred to him as a particular necessity.

He seems to have been obsessed with the idea of 'millionaires': prosperous people who, being without question inferior to himself, were undeserving of their fortune. Both this obsession and his opinion of his own worth are obvious in a letter to Berg dated 31 October 1911, in which he refers to 'millionaires' seven times, making it very clear that he has only disdain for them, and says 'I should think it would suffice that an artist of my stature is, despite great diligence, unable to earn enough money to devote himself to his work halfway free of worries'. Besides the obsession that reveals itself in the frequent occurrences of the word 'Millionäre' and Schönberg's reference to his own 'stature', this letter would seem to reflect an almost childishly transparent envy as well as a rather high-handed loathing of anyone who has been successful.⁸⁶

other members of the Schönberg circle liked to sit with him at concerts, as he offered visible (and at times physical) protection in the event of a fracas.

85 And, it has to be noted, although he was occasionally appreciative of the help he was given unstintingly by his pupils, he was more often bad-tempered and autocratic and constantly complained about the inadequate results of their efforts.

86 All of this letter can be read on pages 87–89 in Chapter 3.



In the autumn of 1911, following his flight from Vienna, Schönberg settled with his family in Berlin. Letters from Webern show that he had been trying to persuade Schönberg to move to Berlin for some months. On 10 May 1911 he had written to Schönberg from Berlin, where he had settled briefly after finishing a year in the theatre in Danzig, encouraging Schönberg to move to Berlin, where Webern said life was much better.

I am convinced that you would find many pupils and other supporters here. / [...] / I believe you would have a much better base here; in every sense. / External life proceeds much more smoothly here. / One can find quite splendid houses, for example, for little money. / Klark [*sic*] pays 45 Marks per month for two rooms, kitchen, bathroom; hot water supply included. / And how splendid this apartment is. / Outside in Friedenau. The Underground to there is already being built. / Houses around there are magnificent. / In general these western districts! / Enormously expanded! / And what really stuns me: / The whole seems as if it came into existence overnight. / Not one old house; all as if built at the same time. / The twentieth century is present in every exterior here. / That is something completely unusual. / Wonderful. / I believe you should think about it; perhaps you are going to come here after all.

On 5 June he wrote about this possibility again, saying that he, Fried and Clark⁸⁷ had discussed Schönberg's move to Berlin and that Busoni would probably write an announcement of it in the newspapers and in *Pan*. Webern says that he believes 'absolutely' that Schönberg would find many pupils in Berlin.

On 31 October, after his move to Berlin, Schönberg wrote to Hertzka:

87 Oskar Fried (1871–1941), composer and conductor who founded the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Berlin in 1908, was among the earliest champions of Schönberg's music in Berlin and had introduced Schönberg to Werner Reinhart, a businessman and patron of the arts in Winterthur. Fried had conducted Schönberg's *Pelleas und Melisande* in Berlin in 1910. Edward Clark (1888–1962) was the Berlin correspondent for *The Musical Times* and a pupil of Fried's. Webern had written to Schönberg about Clark on 5 May 1911 without giving him a name, describing him as being 'colossally enthusiastic' about both Schönberg's pictures and his music. On 10 May he told Schönberg more about Clark:

He has already written, in the winter, about 'Pelleas' in an English journal [*The Musical Times*]. On the occasion of the performance here. / Then in the summer he will also write about you in an English paper. I was with him recently. He is called Klark [*sic*] and is only 21 years old. / I like him very much. He is determined to be your pupil. / He seems, however, not to have composed anything yet. Or he doesn't want to say. He has all of your works that have been published.

Fried had in fact introduced Clark to Schönberg after Fried's performance of *Pelleas und Melisande* in October 1910. Stuckenschmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

You cannot imagine how famous I am here. I am almost too embarrassed to mention it. I am known to everyone. I am recognised from my photographs. People know my 'biography', all about me, all about the 'scenes' I have occasioned, indeed know almost more than I, who forget such things very quickly.⁸⁸

This, however, was simply not true – neither his estimation of his fame in Berlin nor his disingenuous claim that he very quickly 'forgot' the incidents in his past. In fact he was not met with the warmth and enthusiasm that he and his friends had expected in Berlin. There had been no official position for him there, no scrambling to study with him, no pupils at all.

When, a few months later, in the spring of 1912, Schönberg was offered a position at the Academy in Vienna, something he had wished for when he was living in Vienna and which was of course very much hoped for by his pupils and followers there, he accepted, but on 29 June he wrote to Karl Wiener, President of the Academy, that he had changed his mind.

I have long put off this letter, for the last thing I want is to appear unreliable. But my growing disinclination to take up the Viennese position is stronger than all qualms, and so I must, with all regret, inform you that I cannot accept the appointment at the Academy, and must ask you to regard all that was agreed between us in this matter as null and void. / [...] / My main reason is: for the present, I could not live in Vienna. I have not yet got over the things done to me there, I am not yet reconciled. [...] / There are other reasons besides: the position you offered me is not the one I wished for. It would mean spending my whole life, up to my 64th year, droning over harmony and counterpoint. And that I cannot do. Since I am incapable of repeating myself without blushing for shame and since teaching year in year out makes it impossible to produce something entirely new each year, I could scarcely escape the petrification inherent in the situation. And this is a danger I must avoid; again, not because I am afraid of it, but because I consider it beneath the dignity of my rank. It is the sort of danger to which common mercenary soldiers may expose themselves, but not officers. What I had in mind was that I would organise the harm. and cpt. teaching according to my own ideas and then hand it over to one of my pupils, so I should be free to devote myself exclusively to teaching composition. But your intention is to engage two other teachers of composition besides myself, as a result of which all three would have to teach harmony and counterpoint. To all eternity, until the arteries are quite hardened. / Perhaps you will be annoyed with me, but I am not the only one to blame. You will recall: I asked for time to think it over; you insisted on an immediate acceptance. Only two days later I regretted having accepted! And had I not wished to avoid having to refuse, I should at once have

88 Stein, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

written to tell you I cannot come. Had I had time to think it over, you would have been spared these vexations!⁸⁹

Although some might think that accepting a position and then changing one's mind about it two months or so later was less than acceptable behaviour, Schönberg seemed to see this as the fault of Wiener and the Academy, and himself as the blameless party. His pupils were devastated. But Webern wrote to him on 7 July: 'I knew already at the time that I parted from you in Berlin that you were going to refuse. You are so right. When I was in Vienna I really hoped that you would refuse. Have you already an answer from Wiener? Please let me know what these gentlemen say to your refusal.' Whatever Schönberg decided, for whatever reasons, in Webern's eyes he was always right, even if Webern himself had been hoping for the exact opposite until that moment.

On 9 July Berg wrote also, expressing his disappointment, indeed distress, but not agreeing with Schönberg's decision with quite the same fervour as Webern.

The news that you are not coming to Vienna plunged me into complete inner turmoil. Is it really final? [...] Please, lieber Herr Schönberg, let me know somehow, [...] how the matter with the Academy now stands. I still can't believe that nothing has come of this most cherished hope of recent years, the disappointment would be too overwhelming. I'm insanely anxious about it!! — But you must not consider me so selfish that, having once realised your decision is irrevocable, I, too, wouldn't realise that what you think and decide and do is for the best; but it's just my great sorrow at the very thought that you won't be in Vienna next year, meaning I'll continue to live separated from you, that has already seized hold of me and plunged me into a state of utter anxiety.⁹⁰

So life went on in Berlin, though perhaps not quite as Schönberg represented it in his letters. On 3 October 1912 he wrote to Berg of his immense fame in Berlin.

I am very busy with rehearsals for *Pierrot lunaire*.⁹¹ In addition, I'm reading proofs for the full score of the Chamber Symphony and have to revise my Mahler lecture, because I'm giving it in Berlin on the 13th (on the occasion of 'Lied von der Erde').⁹² In between I have orchestrated four Schubert songs for Frau Culp,⁹³ some of which were fairly long. And then there are so many people who come

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33.

⁹⁰ *Briefwechsel* I, p. 252; *Correspondence*, pp. 101–02.

⁹¹ According to *Correspondence*, p. 115, n. 1, the first performance of *Pierrot* received 25 rehearsals.

⁹² *Briefwechsel* I, pp. 287–88, *Correspondence*, p. 115. The first Berlin performance of *Das Lied von der Erde* was on 18 October 1912. That Schönberg's Mahler lecture was on 13 October seems to contradict his grandson's statement (on pages 44–45 above) that he would never schedule anything on the 13th of a month.

⁹³ Julia Culp, a Dutch mezzo-soprano.