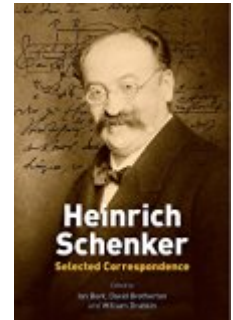


Ian Bent, David Bretherton, William Drabkin, eds.. *Heinrich Schenker: Selected Correspondence*. Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2014. 561 pp. \$99.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-84383-964-4.



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Commissioned by Jonathan Kwan (University of Nottingham)

Heinrich Schenker (1868-1935) was an Austrian music theorist whose writings have exerted a monumental influence on the interpretation of tonal music in both scholarship and performance. Schenker developed a formalized, if not always consistent, theory of harmony and form based on the works of those composers--normally German--he deemed to possess genius. His understanding of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music has been adapted and extended by scholars in many areas of music analysis and utilized by some of the world's most renowned performers, including the conductor Wilhelm Furtwangler (1886-1954) and the pianist Murray Perahia (born 1947). Considering himself foremost an artist, Schenker was a talented pianist and a largely unsuccessful composer. He relied on teaching and the gifts of wealthy friends to support the publication of his writing, including *Harmonielehre* (1906), *Kontrapunkt* (part 1, 1910; part 2, 1922), and *Der freie Satz* (1935), which together form the three volumes of *Neue musikalischen Theorien und Phantasien*.

While there is some overlap, Schenker scholarship can be divided into two broad categories. One is concerned with the application and elucidation of Schenkerian analysis, ranging from textbooks such as Tom Pankhurst's *SchenkerGUIDE* (2008) (along with the associated website www.schenkerguide.com) to the engagement of Schenkerian theory in the analysis of jazz music--for example Steve Larson, *Analyzing Jazz: A Schenkerian Approach* (2009). The other focuses primarily on Schenker himself. *Heinrich Schenker: Selected Correspondence* (hereafter *HS:SC*) belongs to the second of these categories, providing a valuable overview of Schenker's multifaceted professional life through the lens of his rich and extensive correspondence. In addition to the essay collections proceeding from the International Schenker Symposia, Schenker has been the title subject of three other recent books: *Becoming Heinrich Schenker: Music Theory and Ideology*, by Robert P. Morgan (2014); Nicholas Marston, *Heinrich Schenker and Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata* (2013); and Nicholas

Cook, *The Schenker Project: Culture, Race, and Music Theory in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (2007). Although these reference, and in some cases draw considerably on, Schenker's correspondence, *HS:SC* is the first volume of Schenker's correspondence to be published in English.

Despite its considerable length, with over 500 pages of text documenting around 450 items of correspondence, *HS:SC* represents just a brief encounter with the extensive correspondence collection housed within the volume's "mother project," *Schenker Documents Online* (SDO) (www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org). While *HS:SC* is a self-contained collection in its own right, for the fullest appreciation of its contents the volume is best read in conjunction with *SDO*. The latter began under the direction of Ian Bent and William Drabkin in 2003 as The Schenker Correspondence Project, a web-based initiative which aims to publish Schenker's entire correspondence in a digital scholarly edition. From this *SDO* has developed into the largest and most useful single resource in Schenker studies. One might imagine that the wealth of material available online would render any physical attempt at a correspondence collection redundant, but, if anything, *SDO* is enhanced by the publication of a portion of its vast contents—plus some items which have not yet made it onto the web—in this discerning and well-crafted volume.

After a substantial preface the volume is arranged in six sections: "The Early Career" documents Schenker's attempt to make a name for himself as a composer; "Schenker and His Publishers" and "Schenker and the Institutions" follow the course of his often strained professional relationships; "Beethoven's Ninth Symphony" delves into the analytical discussions of Beethoven's ninth, fifth, and third symphonies; and "Contrary Opinions" and "Advancing the Cause" focus on the controversies and establishment of Schenker's musical theories in the wider world. Each of these sections is split into shorter

chapters, usually focusing on a single correspondent or subject. Ian Bent and William Drabkin contribute twelve of the volume's twenty-six chapters while the remaining fourteen are divided among ten other prominent Schenker scholars.

The complete surviving Schenker correspondence totals over 7,000 items, from which *HS:SC* extracts a number of discursive strands particularly significant to Schenker's professional life. Neither Schenker's family life nor his correspondence with other musicologists features prominently, but insofar as the volume is a "selected" correspondence this is not in itself a problem. The editors address the volume's limitations, writing that they "elected ... to offer more material on a limited number of issues, so as to achieve depth in preference to sheer coverage" (p. xxxi). That being said, within the professional sphere *HS:SC* does address a wide range of topics (as demonstrated by the section titles) without compromising on the detail of specific exchanges thanks to the case-study approach of the chapter structure. The editors' commitment to representing individual pieces of correspondence (with the exception of diary entries) without editorial abbreviation further adds to the sense of depth in individual exchanges.

While Schenker's personal life is not the focus of this selected correspondence, the outer reaches of letters and postcards, particularly to Moriz Violin and Anthony van Hoboken, offer glimpses into, and sometimes even substantial comments on, Schenker's outlook on world issues, family life, and friendships. Even within the realm of professional correspondence Schenker's forceful personality is apparent. Emil Hertzka, the director of the publishing house Universal Edition had occasion to write to Schenker after an incident involving the manager of the Gutmann music shop. The full truth of the encounter is lost to history, but Hertzka told Schenker that he had "maligned us [Universal Edition] in a wholly unjustified manner" (p. 122), and demanded an explanation for

his actions. Drafting his response with the aid of an attorney, Schenker wrote curtly: "I freely admit that, in keeping with my character, with which you are familiar, a few days ago I expressed my justified disapproval of the observed action taken against me, and that I expressed it forcefully" (p. 122).

As well as the general introduction outlining the themes embraced by the six larger sections of the volume, each chapter is furnished with a short preface. For chapter 2, "Schoenberg and Schenker's *Syrian Dances*," Arnold Whittall provides, in two brilliantly efficient pages, an outline of Schoenberg's circumstances at the time of writing, an overview of the intellectual differences between the two men that are not fully evident in this early letter selection, and a general contextualization of the *Syrian Dances* (1899). These short introductions are effective both at guiding the reader through the correspondence and also at introducing key areas of discussion concerning Schenker's work and professional relationships. For the most part chapters are organized chronologically, but there is some inevitable overlap--and consequent skipping back and forward in time--between the six large sections. Few people are likely to read the volume cover to cover, however, and the advantages of the topical arrangement far outweigh the occasional chronological irregularity. *HS:SC*'s chapter structure makes room for commentary and, with entries spanning forty years of Schenker's life, ultimately provides a greater insight into the character and development of Schenker and his theories than could be gained in a short-period or single-correspondent collection.

HS:SC incorporates correspondence in a range of media including, but not limited to, postcards, diary entries, telegrams, calling cards, invitations, and, of course, letters. The volume benefits considerably from its diverse source base, with Schenker's diary entries filling in gaps in exchanges where letters have been lost or are otherwise inaccessible. As the editors note, Schenker's

diary entries were often written months after the event and should not be trusted implicitly; however, records such as these are used effectively throughout the volume to aid the comprehension of disconnected conversations as well as to offer a different angle on Schenker's character. A diary entry of April 11, 1925, records an amusing account of the conductor Wilhelm Furtwangler: "Furtwangler's lack of knowledge becomes apparent, and to a degree not previously suspected! He doesn't know sonata form at all!!!... Since he is also lacking insight into the higher demands and achievements, he believes he has to argue for Bruckner as he would for a composer who has something to say.... How disheartening to have to say that he nevertheless is and remains the best conductor of the day!" (p. 305). Schenker's appreciation of Furtwangler's artistry, despite his alleged intellectual deficiency, was staunch, and the pair maintained a (mostly) amiable correspondence until the final years of Schenker's life. More than a decade after Schenker's death, Furtwangler published an article that focused on the concept of *Fernhören*, "distance hearing," a concept taken from Schenker's *Der Tonwille*, published twenty-five years earlier.

Overall *HS:SC*'s supplementary material reaches well beyond the normal expectations of a letter collection and is effective in making the correspondence accessible to those unfamiliar with Schenker's life and work. The index is exceptionally thorough, and there are sixteen pages of images, including handwriting samples, photographic portraits, and a line drawing of Schenker at the piano. Seven pages of the preface present biographical notes on correspondents and other key figures--a very useful reference point even for those familiar with the wider Schenker community. Notably absent from this selection, though, is Heinrich Schenker himself. While it might seem unusual for a correspondence collection to offer biographical information about its central figure, in this case it is perhaps an oversight. Even among musicologists the name "Schenker" is asso-

ciated predominantly with an analytical method rather than an individual, and his biography is relatively little known. Many readers would have welcomed a timeline of Schenker's life, which would have the added bonus of alleviating any uncertainty brought about by the mixed chronology of the correspondence.

Opting for a smooth reading experience over an "authentic" representation of the sometimes haphazardly presented source material, *HS:SC* eschews the in-line annotations and color-coding that are such a useful editorial feature of *SDO*. Notes written in the margin of sources, or added by hand to typed letters, are tidily incorporated into the main body of the text. This is particularly welcome in those letters that depict musical processes (see, for example, letter from Schenker to Felix-Eberhard von Cube, January 12, 1930, p. 401), but for those concerned with the physical presentation of ideas and annotations on the page *SDO* is second only to the original.

University teachers of Schenker's analytical system often wash over the more difficult aspects of Schenker's worldview, for example his commitment to the notion of genius and his antipathy towards democratic systems of government. While *HS:SC* has no such qualms, it does not lay particular emphasis on them either. The volume's most substantial foray into Schenker's thought on the ideas of folk, genius, nationalism, and nature comes in the form of a healthily counterbalanced exchange compiled by Lee Rothfarb (chapter 17, "Expedient Mutuality: Schenker and August Halm"). Halm, a music theorist whose views are more in tune with today's liberal academy than Schenker's, is the moralizing voice in these lengthy and often rhetorical letters. Responding to Schenker's grievance with the Versailles Treaty, Halm writes, "at some point, somewhere, people have to stop this ethnic hatred. And if that should be much more difficult for the conquered and actually betrayed than for the conquerors, then we prove our better quality by making a start none

the less" (p. 271). From this episode and from other letters in *HS:SC* it is clear that Schenker's views stood out, even among his contemporaries, but for a more detailed investigation of Schenker's cultural values and the influence they had on his theoretical work Cook's *The Schenker Project* is more informative.

To an extent *SDO* can be compared with the Photogram Archive project (discussed in chapter 12 of the volume), whose aim was to photograph delicate manuscript scores that they might be studied and brought into the public realm without damaging the original objects. *HS:SC*, together with *SDO*, brings Schenker's correspondence into the public realm, encouraging scholars to engage with material that has until recently been largely inaccessible. Not only is *HS:SC* an impressive volume in its own right, but it is also the best ambassador that this project could hope for, presenting Schenker's correspondence in a manageable and compelling selection with penetrating insights from the most discerning names in Schenker scholarship.

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