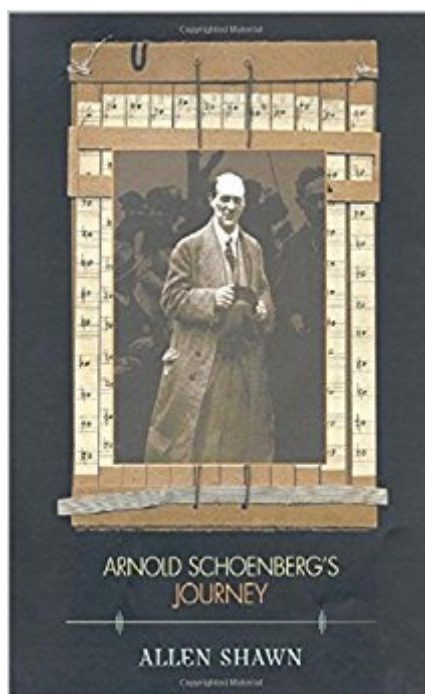


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Arnold Schoenberg's Journey



Synopsis

A composer's study and celebration of a difficult but influential artist, his work, and his time. Proposing that Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) has been more discussed than heard, more tolerated than loved, composer Allen Shawn puts aside ultimate judgments about Schoenberg's place in musical history to explore the composer's fascinating world in a series of "linked essays--soundings" that are more searching than analytical, more suggestive than definitive. In an approach that is unusual for a book of an avowedly introductory character, the text plunges into the details of some of Schoenberg works, while at the same time providing a broad overview of his involvements in music, painting and the history through which he lived. Emphasizing music as an expressive art of rhythms and tones, Shawn approaches Schoenberg primarily from the listener's point of view, uncovering both the seeds of his radicalism in his early music and the traditional bases of his later work. Although liberally sprinkled with musical examples, the text can be read without them. By turns witty, personal, opinionated and instructive, "Arnold Schoenberg's Journey" is above all an appreciation of a great musical and artistic imagination in a time unlike any other.

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Customer Reviews

Schoenberg's music gets treated at times like no more than a necessary intellectual evil: "Ok! Ok! Tonal centers aren't the only musical expressive form! We get it! Now can we please get back to beautiful life-affirming melodies and harmonies?!?!" The music often gets treated from only a theoretical viewpoint, and many people read about Schoenberg, or worse, read opinions about his

music, before really experiencing the music itself. In this sense the music doesn't get a chance to live and breathe on its own without an angorra-thick layer of theory and sometimes obscure and opaque musicology heaped over it. The author of this book states this idea very eloquently in the introduction: "...it is not entirely in a spirit of facetiousness that I have said to friends that I feel perhaps Schoenberg's work deserves a more superficial treatment than it has hitherto received." This theme runs throughout the book, and the reader actually has a chance to get to know Schoenberg's biography and how that biography potentially related to his music without being subjected to stifling theory. The book as a whole is made up of short chapters some of which contain mostly biography and others of which contain mostly descriptions and reflections on some of Schoenberg's major works (there are chapters completely dedicated to the following works: *Verklärte Nacht*, *Gurre-Lieder*, *Brettli-Lieder* (from Schoenberg's surprising tenure with Berlin cabarets in 1901-1902), *Five Pieces For Orchestra*, *Erwartung*, *Pierrot Lunaire*, *Die glückliche Hand*, *Moses Und Aron*, and the *String Trio*). This book doesn't just cover his music, though. One chapter gets devoted to his very literary treatise on harmony, "Harmonielehre".

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