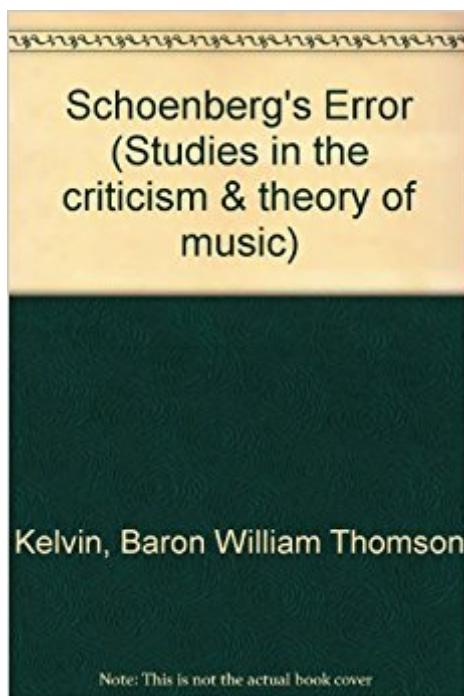


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Schoenberg's Error (Studies In The Criticism And Theory Of Music)



Synopsis

Along with such Viennese contemporaries as Freud, Loos, Mach, Wittgenstein and Kokoshka, Arnold Schoenberg is one of the supremely compelling figures of history. Most commonly known as the originator of the compositional technique of ultimate chromaticism - the method of composing with 12 tones - he left an imposing body of prose in support of his conclusion that tonality is an expendable musical property, and that music's evolutionary path through Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner had unerringly and inevitably led to the "emancipation of dissonance". This text examines the composer's explanations of musical structure and finds them driven by self-serving interpretations of 19th century ideas, from Nietzsche's notion of the artist's cosmic supremacy to Darwin's explanation of biological evolution. This examination further reveals that Schoenberg's perspective was rooted in a severely limited musical repertory (essentially Germanic), virtual ignorance of crucial theoretical abstractions (such as modal theories) and an over-optimistic conception of the integrative powers of human perception.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Prof. Thomson's book presents the facts of how we hear pitched sound and compares them with the major theoretical turn in 20th-century art music, dodecaphony. He finds the two incongruent, and presents many cogent reasons for his finding. Thomson intelligently counters the assumption that 12-tone was an advance in the history of music by presenting relevant acoustic observations and

sound aesthetic arguments.

In this treatise, William Thomson has systematically and successfully deconstructed the atonal/serialist theories of Schoenberg, Webern and Babbitt. He reveals them for what they are: subversive, unnatural academic experiments dealing with the interrelationship between music, mathematics and nihilism. Through a complex theoretical analysis, Thomson affirms what many Twentieth Century composers (such as Sibelius, Bartok, Shostakovich, Vaughan Williams and Adams) argued either through their work, through words or both - namely, that the language of tonality is the natural language of music and is essentially an outgrowth of very deeply entrenched human impulses. In creating works which defy natural imperatives and uphold inhuman precepts, the serialist composers managed to stimulate academic interest and controversy, but their work will almost certainly not be recognized in future as the greatest or most meaningful contribution to Twentieth Century music.

This book attempts to determine the areas in which Schoenberg 'erred' in the creation of his twelve-tone idea. This book deals less with solid theory but more with the ideals of aesthetics, perception, philosophy, and basically many unfounded claims. This book assaults Schoenberg's musical achievements, with very little assessment of his value at all. It seems that this book is seeking to dismantle the strong history of modern music, by claiming that one of its father's was in error.

basically what you have is a political spinner descending into music criticism.

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