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Heinrich Schenker, *The Masterwork in Music*, Volume I (1925). Edited by William Drabkin, translated by Ian Bent, William Drabkin, Richard Kramer, John Rothgeb, Hedi Siegel. Cambridge Studies in Music Theory and Analysis, vol. 5 (Ian Bent, General Editor). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. xviii, 129 pp. ISBN 0-521-45541-3 (hardcover). Originally published in Munich, Vienna, and Berlin as *Der Meisterwerk in der Musik* by Drei Masken Verlag, 1925. Reprinted as three volumes in one by Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1974.

Although Heinrich Schenker is surely the most influential music theorist of the twentieth century in the English-speaking world,¹ the fact that his work is entirely in German has been a serious impediment to the transmission of a complete picture of the evolution of Schenker's thought. Indeed, the history of Schenker translation is a history of the progress of Schenker's influence on and absorption by the English-speaking music theory community. The first important translation was *Harmony* (ed. Oswald Jonas and trans. Elisabeth Mann Borgese (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), a book that, interesting as it is, is by no means indicative of Schenker's mature thought. I imagine that Jonas's immediate purpose was to provide a harmony textbook, rather than fodder for music theorists. Following that were translations of isolated essays, some of the most important of which were published in *The Music Forum*, beginning in the early 1970s. Sylvan Kalib's "Thirteen Essays from the Three Yearbooks 'Das Meisterwerk in der Musik' by Heinrich Schenker: an Annotated Translation," (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1973) has been invaluable and influential; unfortunately, it never made the step to commercial publication. Thus, for a long period intimate knowledge of Schenker's writings was the privilege of theorists with a real command of German—so dense and convoluted is Schenker's prose style—but this only added to the allure. It also forced his *Five Graphic Analyses* into the limelight, a short book of mature analyses in which graphs alone convey his meaning, thus obviating the need for translation.² Finally, the long-awaited translation by Ernst Oster of *Free Composition* in 1979 marked a turning point: for the first time English readers had access to a complete text of Schenker's most mature thought as he wrote it.³

¹ The politics of mid-century Germany—perhaps the intellectual temperament too—were such that Schenker's work was and is largely ignored in Germany. This is now changing. I was delighted to be able to present some basic—and seemingly novel—ideas about Schenker theories to a German audience and to indicate his enormous importance within the English-speaking world at the KlangArt Conference in Osnabrück in June 1995. His ideas are also beginning to become known in the French-speaking world. Carl Schachter has presented a series of lectures on Schenker in France, and Carmen Sabourin has for several years presented Schenkerian concepts at the University of Ottawa.

² First published as *Fünf Urfinie-Tafeln* by the Mannes College of Music in 1932, it was reissued by Dover with an English introduction and glossary by Felix Salzer in 1969.

³ Even in this case, it was only at the last moment that common sense and respect for the integrity of Schenker's work prevailed and ensured the inclusion of the complete text rather than an "edited" one, in which the more controversial philosophical musings would have been excised.

In this context, the publication of Volume I of *The Masterwork In Music* is a long-anticipated event, and we should be grateful to now have at hand such a finely-produced and carefully-edited volume. (In an ideal world, we would by now have a complete collected translation of all of Schenker's writings; in an ideal world time and money don't count!)⁴ Even now it is extremely difficult for any but a German scholar to really develop an appreciation of Schenker's thought as a whole. I understand that Ian Bent does intend to see Volume II in print in 1996, and the third and final volume of *The Masterwork in Music* soon after that. One only questions the expense of publishing three separate volumes rather than one inclusive one.

Volume I of *The Masterwork in Music* contains fourteen essays that fall conveniently into three sections, historical, analytical, and theoretical, translated by five theorists, all of whom have longstanding reputations in Schenker studies. John Rothgeb and Hedi Siegel in particular have made extensive and well-received translations of other works by Schenker. Some six of the essays in this volume have been previously available in English translation, but never as a contiguous group. Identification and numbering of the separate essays as "Chapters" in the English translation seems to imply some continuity of argument, whereas the essays are in fact independent analyses or commentaries on selected pieces and topics and were never titled as "Chapters" in the original.

The historical group comprises two essays, "The Art of Improvisation," which deals with the relationship of baroque methods of textural elaboration in relation to the composing out of tonal structures, and "Abolish the Phrasing Slur," a polemical study in defense of increased respect for composers's autographs.⁵ The bulk of the volume contains analytical work dealing with selected compositions of Bach, Scarlatti, and Chopin. These are shorter essays, but in them we gather glimpses of the progress of Schenker's mature thought, and it is truly exciting to see Schenker working out the inevitable destiny of his line of inquiry, slowly but surely. An assertion such as "'the detail' remains a conceptual embarrassment so long as it is not authenticated as a definite detail of a definite superordinate unified structure. The detail exists not for its own sake, but only in the context of a whole of which it is, precisely, a part" (p. 50), is an early formulation of his unified theory of structural levels, *including motivic detail*, which many theorists seem to have ignored. While in retrospect we would not always agree with Schenker's concept of *Urlinie* as demonstrated in the examples of *The Masterwork in Music*, they mark a necessary stage on the way to his ultimate success in *Free Composition*, and in some instances the translators add footnotes that make such differences apparent. A particularly significant footnote on page 54 indicates that the preponderance of *Urlinie*

⁴All too often in theory translations, piecemeal work is the rule. Thankfully, this trend seems to be over—albeit leaving us still with only partial translations of such major works as Fux's *Gradus ad Parnassum* and Zarlino's *Institutione harmonische*, for example. Partial translations such as these actually inhibit complete translations from appearing later. In Schenker's case, one might wonder whether the partial translation of *Das Meisterwerk* by Kalib actually served to delay the appearance of the complete translation now finally appearing over twenty years later.

⁵Indeed, few musicians are aware of Schenker's pioneering work in the area of manuscript studies.

descents of an octave found in this volume is atypical of Schenker's work as a whole, and that they become less common in his later work. Many theorists today consider the *Urlinie* descent of an octave as either extremely rare or, indeed, only a hypothetical construct that cannot be successfully composed-out in a tonal composition.

One of the most interesting facets of a publication such as this is that it involves five different translators. This gives the reader a chance to appreciate Schenker as transmitted through several different theorists. Richard Kramer, for example, works in a rather more literal manner than Hedi Siegel, whose style is smoother and more idiomatic. A review such as this is not the place to discuss details of analytical interpretations. But I would point out that Schenker's graphs by and large retain a regular rhythmic component. Like motive, rhythm is a neglected aspect of Schenker's work. All too often he is unjustly criticised for ignoring rhythm as he is for ignoring motive, neither of which is true of his work seen as a whole.

Chapter 12, "A Postscript to Beethoven's Opus 110" would be better headed "Further remarks concerning Beethoven's Opus 110" ("Noch einmal zu Beethoven's op. 110") since the postscript is not to Beethoven's work but to Schenker's earlier monograph on Opus 110 from *Beethoven, die letzten fünf Sonaten: kritische Ausgabe mit Einführung und Erläuterungen* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1914). This brief article, occasioned by an article and communication from the musicologist Walter Engelsmann, if read at all, must be read in the context of Schenker's earlier analysis, and with a strong tolerance for his nit-picking and abusive tone.

Chapter 13, "Further Consideration of the *Urlinie*: I" is perhaps the most important essay in the volume, containing as it does Schenker's attempt to set down from a theoretical perspective, the significance of his concept of *Urlinie* as a governing feature of tonal music. It is quite clear that he is struggling to understand and define the scope and significance of this cardinal concept. The following chapter, "Elucidations," is a reprint of his digest of basic concepts of voice leading, as set out the previous year (1924) in the final issues of *Der Tonwille*. As Bent's footnote makes clear, the Elucidations were to undergo dramatic revision in consequence of the compelling formulation of the *Ursatz* in *Free Composition*.

The final chapter, *Miscellanea*, is a collection of seemingly random thoughts, of the kind that were for many years considered irrelevant to a "scientific" understanding of Schenker's concepts of musical structure, e.g., "The self-sufficiency of genius is like solid gold coin. The ideas of others are like paper money" (p. 118). But as Schenker the person recedes into the mists of time, random images such as these provide an invaluable backdrop to his thought. This philosophical context was obvious to the first generation of Schenker scholars such as Salzer, Jonas, and Oster, but it becomes less and less so as time passes. These musings humanize Schenker and show us his sense of wonderment at creation and creativity as much as his intolerance and disgust at the cultural and social decay of his time. An appendix of musical scores that are not easily obtained and an index are valuable additions that round out the volume.

The problem with Schenker for English readers has always been a language problem. Complex ideas seemingly formed and reformed themselves as they went along, through over a quarter of a century of intense intellectual development. Schenker himself said it when he quoted Kant in the Foreword to *The Masterwork*: "The danger here lies not in being disproved, but rather in not being understood." Schenker's inelegant and demanding prose-style is occasionally problematic and sometimes even embarrassing. "If, according to Fig. 7b, the harmony must proceed directly from the tonic to the dominant divider, the inclusion of the harmony on E, in the sense of II#3-V, suggests itself in the prolongation [Fig. 7c]" (p. 9). Oh, really! The basic meaning here, albeit not literal, is "A secondary dominant, E, elaborates the motion from I to V." This example illustrates the difficulty of comprehension that plagues Schenker. If only Schenker had had the prose skills of Adorno!

One must ask why the format of the English translation is different than the original: oblong rather than upright, and consequently in two panels of text per page rather than one. Evidently, the practical purpose is to accommodate the several large analytical graphs within the body of the book rather than as fold-out supplements at the end. Conveniently, this format provides a uniformity with the English translation of *Free Composition*. In the Foreword, William Drabkin discusses the use of photo reprints of the original graphs rather than resetting them with English explanatory words as was done by Ernst Oster for *Free Composition*. The idea of avoiding an accumulation of misprints by photo-reproducing is in my opinion a weak argument, and I think that English readers would for the most part be better served with English versions of the graphs. It will remain to be seen, however, just how successful the third and final volume will be. The original contains a large, independent packet of extensive manuscript graphs for the entire "Eroica" Symphony, that will be reduced to the format of the present volume only with great difficulty.

The Masterwork in Music is not as essential to an understanding of Schenker's idea of structural levels as *Free Composition*, yet it is crucial for anyone considering the development of those ideas. For it is in *The Masterwork* especially, that the concepts of *Urlinie* and *Ursatz* find their most significant development. Indeed, it is with the conclusion of *The Masterwork* that Schenker's analytical work is for the most part complete, and he becomes as it were, a pure theorist, writing *Free Composition* not in search of more answers, but as his final answers to all the questions. With the publication of the complete translation of *The Masterwork in Music*, English readers really lack only a similar treatment of his earlier set of essays, *Der Tonwille*, in order to have a virtually complete picture of Schenker's development as recorded in his published works. Ultimately, achieving this agenda will allow Schenker the theorist to speak for himself, rather than having to depend on both advocates and detractors as in the past.

William Renwick