



## ARNOLD SCHOENBERG'S ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE QUEST FOR EXPRESSION IN MODERN MUSIC

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### ABSTRACT:

This article aims to examine the interdisciplinary dimension of Expressionism through the music of Arnold Schoenberg. Shaped by the social crises of the early 20th century, Expressionist aesthetics is approached as a form of artistic expression that conveys the individual's inner world, subconscious, and existential anxieties. Schoenberg's atonal and twelve-tone musical language, developed through a departure from tonality, is considered a concrete outcome of the quest to reflect this psychological depth.

The study presents an interdisciplinary analysis prepared using qualitative methods, examining both musical and visual productions in line with literature from musicology, art history, and aesthetics. Emphasizing the role of Expressionism in articulating the vulnerability of the modern individual, this article holds significance in illuminating the psychological and cultural functions of art.

### KEYWORDS:

SCHOENBERG, EXPRESSIONISM, TWELVE-TONE TECHNIQUE.

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### INTRODUCTION

Arnold Schoenberg, one of the most significant and innovative figures of 20th-century music, brought about radical transformations in both composition and music theory. By pushing the boundaries of traditional tonal music, he developed entirely new techniques such as atonality and the twelve-tone system, thus laying the foundation for modernist music. Schoenberg's artistic development was deeply influenced by the cultural, social, and political climate of his time. The *fin-de-siècle* atmosphere of Vienna—shaped by profound transformations across fields from psychoanalysis to expressionism, and from painting to literature—provided the intellectual environment in which Schoenberg forged his unique creative path (Iren, 2014; Küçük, 2015).

This study examines four main phases of Schoenberg's life and art *The Vienna Years and Early Experiences (1874–1901)*; *The Search for Expression and Transition to Atonality (1901–1909)*; *The Visual and Expressionist Period (1909–1914)*; *Systematization and the Twelve-Tone Technique (1920–1933)*; and *Nazism and Exile in America (1933–1951)* with the aim of revealing the evolution of his innovative musical approach and the historical contexts

that shaped it (Schoenberg Center Archive, 2025).

Schoenberg's significance in music history lies not only in the technical innovations he introduced but also in his profound engagement with individual psychology, aesthetic philosophy, and the modernist art movements of his time. This intertwining of aesthetic and technical dimensions reflects what Dahlhaus (1982) described as the essential unity of musical form and expressive function in the context of modernism. Accordingly, any evaluation of his work requires an understanding of the broader cultural networks that surrounded him and the pivotal moments in his life. In this context, the stylistic and expressive transformations in his music will be explored in relation to personal traumas, intellectual relationships, and socio-historical change.

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

How did Arnold Schoenberg's artistic and life experiences influence the transformation of his musical development beyond the boundaries of traditional tonality into a new language of expression in modern music?

## METHODOLOGY

This study is designed as a qualitative and descriptive research. The qualitative research approach refers to the use of data collection methods aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and social contexts. Its descriptive nature indicates that the research seeks to systematically and thoroughly describe the current state of the phenomenon under investigation. In other words, the study aims to present the examined phenomenon in a detailed and comprehensive manner as it is.

This research focuses on the life, works, and artistic philosophy of Arnold Schoenberg from both historical and aesthetic perspectives. Primary sources include the composer's musical works, personal correspondence, and contemporary critiques. Secondary sources encompass scholarly studies in the fields of musicology, art history, and psychoanalysis. The analysis of the works involves interpretation of their musical structural features alongside the historical and cultural context of the period. Additionally, interdisciplinary interactions such as Schoenberg's painting works and his relationship with Kandinsky are evaluated from an art historical perspective.

## THE MAIN PHASES OF SCHOENBERG'S LIFE

### a) The Vienna Years and Early Experiences (1874-1901)

The years 1874 to 1901 mark Arnold Schoenberg's early period, characterized by a self-taught artistic development shaped by late Romantic influences and the initial signs of his move toward atonality. This phase represents a foundational and exploratory stage in his musical journey, undertaken without formal conservatory training.

Arnold Schoenberg was born on September 13, 1874, in Vienna, the cultural center of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Growing up as the child of a middle-class Jewish family, his interest in art emerged at an early age. The sudden death of his father in 1889 forced Schoenberg to mature both economically and emotionally. Due to the need to support his family, he had to start working at a young age and, as a result, could not pursue systematic conservatory education (Frisch, 1997). Nevertheless, through his own efforts, he developed his knowledge of music theory, composition, and orchestration. One of his most influential mentors during this time was composer and conductor Alexander von Zemlinsky, who would later become his brother-in-law. Zemlinsky's guidance was instrumental in deepening Schoenberg's understanding of traditional harmony and counterpoint and in shaping his early compositional attempts (Beaumont, 2000; Çokoğullu, 2017).

By the late 1890s, Schoenberg's first compositions clearly reflected the traits of the late Romantic style. This early period, oscillating between Johannes Brahms's structural compositional approach and Richard Wagner's chromatic richness and dramatic intensity, was a time of artistic identity formation for Schoenberg. Particularly notable is

his string sextet *Verklärte Nacht* (Transfigured Night), composed in 1899 and inspired by a poem by Richard Dehmel. This work stands as a key example of his transitional style. Although the piece possesses Wagnerian formal intensity, it is integrated with Brahms's thematic development techniques; its harmonic language sometimes intensifies to the point of pushing beyond traditional tonal boundaries (Frisch, 1997).

*Verklärte Nacht* not only reveals Schoenberg's early stylistic tendencies but also highlights the importance he placed on emotional and psychological expression. Themes such as the relationship between man and woman, guilt, forgiveness, and spiritual transformation are explored through the music's dramatic narrative. Although this work remains connected to the tonal tradition, it carries an intensity that foreshadows the emotional depth of Schoenberg's future atonal and twelve-tone compositions (Taruskin, 2005).

The fin-de-siècle atmosphere of Vienna was shaped not only by political and social upheavals but also by the rise of psychoanalysis (Freud), modern art (Klimt, Schiele), and literature (Hofmannsthal, Schnitzler). Schoenberg was very much a part of this intellectual climate. His aesthetic perspective extended beyond music to encompass poetry, literature, and the visual arts. During this period, the first signs of challenging artistic boundaries began to emerge: tonal-centered harmonic structures gradually loosened, and Schoenberg started developing a freer and more experimental expressive language that more directly conveyed his inner world (Rosen, 1996; İren, 2014).

After marrying Mathilde von Zemlinsky and moving to Berlin in 1901, Schoenberg's artistic circle expanded, and his process of modernist transformation accelerated. Nevertheless, his years in Vienna remained a foundational period that shaped both his technical skills and his emotional and artistic sensitivities, leaving a lasting impact on his later works (Adorno, 2019).

### b) The Search for Expression and the Transition to Atonality (1901-1909)

In 1901, Arnold Schoenberg married Mathilde Zemlinsky and moved to Berlin, stepping into one of Europe's most dynamic artistic circles. During this period, the support of Richard Strauss and especially Gustav Mahler helped increase Schoenberg's recognition in both intellectual and artistic communities. Finding greater freedom to develop his artistic vision in Berlin, Schoenberg soon returned to Vienna, where he began teaching. Among his students were notable figures such as Alban Berg and Anton Webern; this trio would later be known as the "Second Viennese School," becoming foundational pillars of 20th-century music (Kuluç, 2016).

This period marks a transformative phase in which Schoenberg pushed the boundaries of tonal music and took his aesthetic explorations to radical new heights (Adorno, 2019). The year 1908 stands out as a sharp turning point both personally and artistically. The affair between his wife Mathilde and the young Expressionist painter Richard

Gerstl, followed by Gerstl's suicide, caused profound emotional upheaval in Schoenberg's inner life. This traumatic experience triggered a new phase in his music characterized by the dissolution of the tonal center. Traditional harmonic structures were no longer adequate to express his feelings and thoughts. This internal crisis accelerated the birth of an expressionist musical language (Adorno, 2019; Rosen, 1996).

Among the works composed during this period, *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten* (The Book of the Hanging Gardens) (1908–1909) is regarded as one of the first pieces where atonality is systematically manifested. Based on the symbolic poetry of Stefan George, this song cycle transcends the classical lied form; it lacks a tonal center, and its harmonic language rejects traditional expectations of resolution. As a result, meaning in the music is constructed not through structural conventions but through psychological associations and symbolic imagery. Themes of separation, loss, and dreamlike natural images align perfectly with the harmonic fluidity and melodic ambiguity in the music. In this context, the music becomes not only a vehicle of expression but a direct manifestation of unconscious experience (Iren, 2014; Küçük, 2015).

One year later, in 1909, the monodrama *Erwartung* (Expectation) was composed, representing one of the peaks of Schoenberg's expressionist musical approach. Written for a single soprano and orchestra, this approximately 30-minute stage work lacks the structural unity of a traditional opera; instead, it presents a fragmented perception of time and space. The libretto narrates a woman's experience of fear, anxiety, and emotional collapse as she searches for her lover in the darkness of night. Through the use of free atonality, Schoenberg directly conveys the character's unconscious onto an auditory plane. The musical expression achieves a psychoanalytic depth through constantly shifting harmonies, sudden dynamic changes, and the absence of traditional cadences (Küçük, 2015).

These two works can be read not only as the beginnings of atonality but also as musical representations of individual unconsciousness, anxiety, and identity crisis in modern music. While *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten* offers an introspective rupture and melancholy, *Erwartung* manifests this rupture as an expressionist explosion. Here, Schoenberg assumes a role not merely as a composer but as a thinker-artist who projects the psychological tensions and existential confinements of the modern individual beyond sound itself (Schönberg Center Archive, 2025).

This phase represents a pivotal threshold in music history, marked by a break not only on an aesthetic level but also in philosophical and psychological terms. Schoenberg's abandonment of traditional harmony was not simply a technical innovation but a necessary outcome of his search for individual expression. Therefore, the period from 1901 to 1909 can be regarded as a fundamental turning point that transformed not only Schoenberg's music but also the notions of expression and structure in 20th-century art.

As Dahlhaus (1982) emphasized, the shift away from tonality in early twentieth-century music was not merely a stylistic break but an aesthetic necessity rooted in historical consciousness

### c) Painting and the Expressionist Period (1909–1914)

Between 1909 and 1914, Arnold Schoenberg underwent a significant transformation in his artistic production. This period marks a creative zenith characterized both by his complete abandonment of tonality in music—transitioning into free atonality—and by an intensified interest in the visual arts. Particularly, the expressionist paintings and self-portraits he produced between 1908 and 1911 are tangible reflections of an individual quest to understand and express his inner world (Iren, 2014; Rucsanda, 2019; Adams, 1997).

Recurring themes in Schoenberg's paintings include the fragmentation of the self, existential loneliness, psychological collapse, and unconscious imagery. His self-portraits, in particular, reveal deformities in facial features, vacant gazes, and dramatic figure positioning, all vividly conveying the artist's inner turmoil. These works establish artistic and spiritual affinities with expressionist painters such as Edvard Munch and Oskar Kokoschka. Art historians often describe this approach with the term *musikalischer Expressionismus* (musical expressionism), indicating Schoenberg's effort to unveil the complex layers of the human psyche through both sound and image (Anatone, 2025; Iren, 2014).

In 1911, Schoenberg's participation in the expressionist exhibition organized by the *Der Blaue Reiter* group in Berlin evidences his active involvement in the visual arts and his engagement with leading avant-garde circles of the time. His artistic friendship with Wassily Kandinsky, which developed during this period, was founded upon their shared belief in the intuitive and abstract power of art. Kandinsky's work *On the Spiritual in Art*, which champions the abstract nature of music as the ideal art form, theoretically reinforced Schoenberg's creative output in both composition and painting (Brand & Hailey, 1997; Tate Modern, 2024; The Guardian, 2024).

The musical pinnacle of this period, *Pierrot Lunaire*, Op. 21 (1912), exemplifies the interdisciplinary nature of Schoenberg's artistic vision. Comprising 21 pieces drawn from Albert Giraud's symbolic and dark poetry, this work is pioneering both formally and thematically. The vocal part employs the *Sprechstimme* (speech-song) technique, which conveys the textual meaning on both melodic and theatrical levels, generating a dramatic mode of expression. This style departs from traditional singing techniques by intensifying the semantic depth of words through musical gestures (Anatone, 2025; Adorno, 1997).

The *Klangfarbenmelodie* (tone color melody) technique is rendered in *Pierrot Lunaire* with an almost painterly sensitivity: melodies are divided among different instruments, creating tonal transitions akin to color gradations in a painting. Through this technique,

Schoenberg "paints" a melody with instrumental "colors," emphasizing not only the horizontal (melodic) but also the vertical (coloristic and timbral) dimensions of sound. This feature of *Pierrot Lunaire* clearly manifests Schoenberg's connection to the visual arts and his desire to bring a pictorial approach to music (Anatone, 2025).

The character of the work, much like his self-portraits from the period, reflects a fragmented self, a divided identity, and an inner world bordering on madness. The figure of Pierrot, an anti-hero who suffers existential anguish under the moonlight, oscillating between reason and imagination, serves as the theatrical embodiment of expressionist themes. Consequently, *Pierrot Lunaire* can be read not only as a musical composition but also as a psychological portrait of the modern individual.

#### d) Systematization: The Twelve-Tone Technique and Teaching (1920–1933)

The devastating impacts of World War I and the subsequent social and political turmoil in Europe left profound marks on Arnold Schoenberg's music. The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the establishment of the Weimar Republic, and the rising political uncertainties in Germany directly influenced the artist's works and musical philosophy. During this chaotic era, Schoenberg sought new order and meaning in his music. The twelve-tone technique (dodecaphony), developed in 1923, can be understood both as an effort to ground music in a systematic framework and as a response to the complexities of the modern age (Adorno, 2019). Through this technique, Schoenberg dismantled the hierarchical, centric structure of tonality by assigning equal importance to all twelve tones, aiming to create a democratic and structural order in music (Adorno, 1997).

**The twelve-tone technique**, developed by Arnold Schoenberg in the 1920s, is a systematic method of composition designed to replace traditional tonality in Western music. This technique rejects the hierarchical structure of tonal harmony and is based on the equal use of all twelve semitones of the chromatic scale in a non-hierarchical order. The composer constructs a "tone row" a specific sequence of the twelve chromatic pitches which serves as the foundation of the composition. This row can be employed not only in its original form but also in its inversion, retrograde, and retrograde inversion, allowing for multiple permutations. Through this method, structural coherence is maintained while avoiding tonal repetition, thereby enabling rich melodic and harmonic variety within an atonal framework (Taruskin, 2005; Rosen, 1996).

The twelve-tone technique was not merely a compositional method but evolved into a musical philosophy. Schoenberg described this system as "a new order and freedom in music," believing that music required structural discipline and methodology. Thus, music was purified from randomness and excessive sentimentality, establishing a balance between logic and emotion (Adorno, 2019). In line with Dahlhaus's (1982) assertion that systematization in

music reflects the modern demand for aesthetic coherence, Schoenberg's twelve-tone method can be seen as both a technical innovation and an aesthetic response to the fragmentation of tradition. In this context, Schoenberg's appointment as professor of composition at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin in 1925 not only institutionalized the twelve-tone technique academically but also enabled him to exert lasting influence on a new generation of composers. His students, including Alban Berg and Anton Webern, enriched the technique with diverse interpretations, contributing to its technical and aesthetic plurality (Adorno, 1997).

The political climate resonated in Schoenberg's works both directly and indirectly. The weakening of the Weimar Republic and the rise of radical political movements led to polarization within the art scene. Being of Jewish descent, Schoenberg was deeply concerned about the ascendancy of Nazi ideology. With the Nazis' rise to power in 1933, he was forced to resign his position in Berlin and emigrate to the United States. This political pressure brought about a period of introspective pessimism and questioning in his music (Schönberg Center Archive, 2025).

Among the prominent compositions of this period employing the twelve-tone technique are *Suite for Piano, Op. 25* and *Variations for Orchestra, Op. 31*. In *Op. 25*, Schoenberg integrates the traditional suite form with the twelve-tone method, simultaneously respecting classical formal traditions and reflecting the innovations of modernism. *Op. 31's* orchestral variations display a delicate balance between mathematical precision and musical expressivity. These works demonstrate that the twelve-tone technique was not simply an academic exercise but capable of conveying profound emotional and aesthetic messages (O'Connell, 2020).

In summary, Schoenberg's period from 1920 to 1933 constitutes a turning point in modern music history through the systematization of music and his pedagogical activities. The twelve-tone technique influenced numerous aspects of contemporary music, and political uncertainties found reflection in the artist's music on both individual and societal levels. During this time, Schoenberg's music became a vivid testament to the coexistence of discipline and freedom, structure and expression.

#### e) Nazism and Emigration to America (1933–1951)

The Nazi Party's rise to power in Germany in 1933 brought profound personal and professional changes to Arnold Schoenberg. Targeted due to his Jewish identity, the artist was forced to flee threats in Germany, initially seeking refuge in France. However, as Europe's political situation deteriorated, Schoenberg emigrated to the United States in 1934, where he would spend the remainder of his life. Settling primarily in California, he taught composition at prestigious institutions such as the University of Southern California and UCLA. Although this new environment somewhat reduced his creative output, it increased his influence in music education and theory (Anatone, 2025).

The American period is marked by deeper introspection and identity exploration in Schoenberg's music. In the shadow of European tragedies, he increasingly turned to Jewish culture and religious themes. His works from this era carry significant musical, historical, and cultural messages. *Kol Nidre* (1938), inspired by a traditional text used in Jewish prayer and mourning ceremonies, expresses Schoenberg's attachment to his religious identity and history. The piece simultaneously mourns past suffering and harbors hope for the future (Adorno, 1997; Kuluç, 2016; Schönberg Center Archive, 2025).

Completed in 1947, *A Survivor from Warsaw* arguably stands as Schoenberg's most important American work, directly expressing the horror of the Holocaust through music and narration. This dramatic monodrama recounts a tragic event in a concentration camp. The work's intense orchestration, the realism of the narrator's text, and the poignant musical emphasis on the Jewish prayer *Shema Yisrael* make it one of the 20th century's most monumental compositions. *A Survivor from Warsaw* symbolizes not only Schoenberg's compositional mastery but also his profound human response to one of history's darkest chapters (Shawn, 2002).

During this period, Schoenberg's music was shaped at the intersection of personal tragedy and collective memory. The Nazi regime's oppression and exile triggered a sense of political and ethical responsibility in his compositions. While American music circles initially regarded his new techniques as complex and inaccessible, his teaching efforts significantly contributed to the dissemination of modern music. Through his students, the twelve-tone technique and contemporary music theory took root in the United States.

Schoenberg's final years in America were marked by intense personal and artistic reflection.

## THE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN SCHOENBERG AND KANDINSKY

During this period, Schoenberg's art is characterized by a dynamic tension established between sound and image, meaning and form, structure and expression. This creative phase, in which painting and music intertwine, positions the artist not merely as a figure traversing disciplinary boundaries but also as a thinker and creator embodying the holistic transformation of modern art.

Arnold Schoenberg and Wassily Kandinsky's paths crossed in Munich during the early twentieth century—a time marked by profound formal and spiritual transformations in art. Both artists challenged the traditional limits within their respective disciplines to develop new modes of expression. Schoenberg, by pushing the boundaries of tonality toward atonality in music, and Kandinsky, by abandoning figurative elements in painting to pursue abstraction, sought the essence of art beyond sensory perception on a spiritual plane. This parallel quest quickly brought them together on a shared aesthetic ground and an intellectual exchange platform (Hahl-Koch, 1984; Gregory, 1991; Anatone, 2015).

Their relationship began when Kandinsky attended a chamber music concert given by Schoenberg in Munich on January 2, 1911. The program featured works emblematic of Schoenberg's departure from tonal centers toward a freer harmonic language, including *String Quartet No. 2* and *Drei Klavierstücke, Op. 11*. Kandinsky expressed the profound impact this music had on him in a letter to Schoenberg dated January 3, 1911, stating that the music opened doors to a world he sensed intuitively but had yet to shape formally. Kandinsky's declaration that he was "also striving to break the chains of external reality in painting" became not only an expression of mutual admiration but also a testament to their shared creative vision (Hahl-Koch, 1984; Rucsanda, 2019; Küçük, 2015).

Schoenberg responded to Kandinsky's candid and profound approach with equal openness, emphasizing the importance of thinking not only in sound but also in color. This reciprocal understanding further developed within the context of the *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider) art group, co-founded by Kandinsky. Schoenberg's expressionist paintings were exhibited in the group's 1912 show. Represented notably by works such as *Self-Portrait* (1910) and *The Angel* (1911), Schoenberg foregrounded themes in his visual art—fragmentation of the self, inner tension, and individual solitude—that paralleled his musical concerns. His visual works thus aligned with *Der Blaue Reiter's* advocacy for expressing inner reality through art (Brand and Hailey, 1997; Tate, 2024).

Kandinsky's 1911 treatise *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (On the Spiritual in Art) theorizes this artistic partnership by positioning music as the most abstract and direct language of the soul, while asserting that painting must also achieve the same spiritual depth. This conceptual framework closely aligns with Schoenberg's aesthetic stance, exemplified in works such as *Erwartung* and *Pierrot Lunaire*. Both artists sought expressions beyond formal structures; just as Schoenberg's free atonal music manifests the unconscious, intuition, and spiritual turmoil through sound, Kandinsky's compositions of color and form aim to evoke an internal resonance in the viewer, independent of external reality (Anatone, 2025; Küçük, 2015).

However, this intellectual closeness eventually gave way to disappointment. In the 1920s, Kandinsky's associations with the Bauhaus and certain attitudes therein—particularly those perceived by Schoenberg as distancing from his Jewish identity—strained their friendship. Schoenberg's letter to Kandinsky from 1923, in which he expressed disillusionment with the divergence in their beliefs despite their artistic affinities—"I am surprised that our beliefs differ so much, when our art is so similar"—reflects not only their personal rift but also the infiltration of rising discriminatory political climates into artistic circles in Europe (Adams, 1995).

Nonetheless, the artistic dialogue between Arnold Schoenberg and Wassily Kandinsky from 1911 to 1914 remains one of the most striking examples of the bridges modernism built across disciplines. Their relationship

demonstrated how distinct expressive forms such as music and painting could nourish each other by addressing a common spiritual dimension. This exchange pioneered interdisciplinary art thinking and contributed fundamentally to the theoretical foundations of contemporary art (Adams, 1995).

### KANDINSKY'S SYNESTHETIC VISION: PAINTING AS MUSIC

Wassily Kandinsky, a pioneering theorist of the symbiosis between sound and image, experienced two transformative events in 1896 that profoundly shaped his artistic outlook: a French Impressionist exhibition in Moscow and a performance of Wagner's *Lohengrin*. Kandinsky described a revelatory moment in which colors and lines evoked musical emotions, articulating the fusion of auditory and visual stimuli—a concept that became central to his art (Rucsanda, 2019; Hahl-Fontaine, 1993; Hass, 2009).

Kandinsky's groundbreaking theory posits a direct correspondence between musical tones and colors. He argued that colors possess a potent force that directly affects the soul. He likened color to a keyboard, the eyes to the keys, and the soul to the piano's multi-stringed structure; the artist's hand functions as an intermediary that elicits vibrations within the viewer's inner world (Kandinsky, 2014). In his masterpiece *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Kandinsky employs musical analogies for colors—for instance, light blue evokes flute tones, while dark blue suggests the deep sounds of the organ.

Rejecting intellectual abstraction based on logic, Kandinsky maintained that the true power of art emerges solely through sensitivity and spontaneous, inner impulses (Brion, 1972). His graphic experiments translating Beethoven's Fifth Symphony into arrangements of points and lines reflect a desire to visualize musical structure; however, the aim was not to "paint music" but rather to express its structural essence (Rucsanda, 2019).

The stage work *Der gelbe Klang* exemplifies Kandinsky's belief that art arises from an inner necessity—it is a *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total artwork) combining music, color, and text, emerging as a vibrant Expressionist drama paralleling Schoenberg's *Die glückliche Hand* (Hahl-Koch, 1984).

Contemporary letters reveal their shared aesthetic goals, particularly in their mutual rejection of tonality and representational constraints (Hahl-Koch, 1984; Gregory, 1991). Kandinsky's *Impression III (Concert)*, created after attending a Schoenberg concert, materializes this fusion of sensory impressions—expressing the dynamism and resonance of the musical performance through abstract forms and colors (Buja, 2016). Despite occasional tensions with critics, this friendship served as a wellspring of creative synergy that deeply influenced the development of twentieth-century art and music (Rucsanda, 2019).

Kandinsky's mature works, such as *Composition VI*, reflect a sophisticated interplay of harmony and dissonance in

color and form, visually articulating Schoenberg's atonal chromaticism through vibrant, sometimes discordant palettes and dynamic spatial arrangements (Graham-Dixon, 2008). For Kandinsky, painting was a "musical seeing," and music was his supreme teacher (Weiss, 1979).

### CONCLUSION

Arnold Schoenberg stands as a pivotal figure not only in the history of music but also within the broader discourse of twentieth-century art. His compositional style evolved from the rich harmonic language of late Romanticism to the boundless expressive realm of atonality, and ultimately toward a systematic modernist order through twelve-tone technique. This stylistic transformation was not merely an aesthetic choice but a reflection of historical, social, and personal tensions embodied in his art.

Adorno describes Schoenberg as the "conscience" of modern music. According to Adorno, Schoenberg's dissolution of tonal centrism should not be understood simply as a technical reform but as an artistic response to the existential crisis of bourgeois society (Adorno, 2003). From this perspective, the structural fragmentation in Schoenberg's music is not chaotic disorder but a faithful representation of the fractured existence of the individual. The concept of "order within disorder" inherent in atonality and twelve-tone composition represents an effort to reconstruct artistic freedom without surrendering to absolute chance.

Schoenberg's work carries not only individual expression but also historical responsibility. Especially during his exile from Nazi Germany to America, compositions such as *A Survivor from Warsaw* transformed art into a medium for political memory and ethical awareness. This piece stands as a landmark, not only as a musical representation of the Holocaust but also as a powerful testament to art's capacity to bear witness.

In terms of societal impact, Schoenberg's influence extended beyond music to resonate in visual arts, literature, and theater. Contemporaries such as Wassily Kandinsky, Egon Wellesz, Bertolt Brecht, and Thomas Mann were directly or indirectly inspired by his aesthetic stance. Notably, his colleagues in the Second Viennese School, Alban Berg and Anton Webern, creatively reinterpreted his twelve-tone system, laying foundational pillars for the modern musical repertoire.

Moreover, the theme of the "fragmentation of the self" evident in Schoenberg's musical and visual works reflects not only individual psychology but also the spiritual condition of an era. In this regard, his oeuvre can be read as an artistic projection of the socio-political ruptures—wars, migrations, ideological conflicts—that marked the early twentieth century. As Adorno emphasized, Schoenberg's radicalism is not a severance from the past but an effort to expose the conflicts inherent within it. Consequently, his music has become a resource that expanded the expressive vocabulary of both his contemporaries and subsequent generations.

In conclusion, Arnold Schoenberg's compositional style and artistic innovations should be understood not merely as technical or formal transformations but as an aesthetic stance interrogating the inner world of the modern individual, societal anxieties, and historical burdens. He transformed modern art not only in form but in meaning, articulating through music the notion that art is not merely expression but a mode of existence.

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