

New findings about Roberto Gerhard and Arnold Schoenberg in the light of their correspondence

Abstract: A first analysis of the eighty-two letters exchanged between Roberto Gerhard and his master Arnold Schoenberg shows new findings regarding the lives and works of both composers. Firstly, it provides relevant biographical information concerning the close relationship between them, the importance of their wives, Gertrud Schoenberg and Poldi Gerhard, the consequences of the increasing anti-Semitism in Germany from 1932 on, the Schoenberg's stay in Barcelona from 1931 till 1932 and the traumatic traces the wars of the 20th century left on both composers, who had to fight for a new life in exile. Secondly, the collected documents shed light on the creative process of some of Schoenberg's works (e.g. the opera *Moses and Aron*) and Roberto Gerhard's composing process, not only concerning the *Cantata L'alta naixença del Rei en Jaume* (1931) but, especially, the period of reflection and theoretical research on Serialism that Gerhard went through since 1950, which is documented in a long letter the composer sent to Schoenberg on December 16th of the same year. The letters also expound on the Schoenberg's *Monn Concert* episode dedicated to Pau Casals.

Keywords: Roberto Gerhard, Arnold Schoenberg, Pau Casals, Correspondence, Serialism.

Resumen: El primer análisis de las ochenta y dos cartas intercambiadas entre Roberto Gerhard y su maestro Arnold Schönberg muestra nuevos hallazgos relativos a la vida y obra de ambos compositores. En primer lugar, arroja luz sobre la estrecha relación de amistad entre ambos y el papel que juegan en este vínculo íntimo sus esposas Gertrud Schönberg y Poldi Gerhard; las consecuencias del antisemitismo reinante en Alemania desde 1932; la estancia en Barcelona de los Schönberg y las huellas traumáticas que las guerras del siglo XX dejaron en ambos músicos. En segundo lugar, la documentación encontrada aporta nueva información sobre la creación de algunas obras compositivas de Schönberg (como la ópera *Moisés y Aarón*) y sobre el proceso creativo de Roberto Gerhard, no solo en lo concerniente a su *Cantata L'alta naixença del Rei en Jaume* (1931) sino, especialmente, en lo relativo al período de reflexión e investigación teórica sobre el Serialismo que Gerhard comenzó en 1950, hecho documentado en la extensa carta que el compositor dirigió a Schönberg el 16 de diciembre de dicho año. Las cartas también revelan nuevos datos concernientes al Concierto de Monn que Schönberg dedicó a Pau Casals.

Palabras clave: Roberto Gerhard, Arnold Schönberg, Pau Casals, Correspondencia, Serialismo,

1. Introduction

Although the life and work of Arnold Schoenberg has been extensively studied and documented and it is still the focus of international musicological research, the figure of the Catalan musician Roberto Gerhard is still not studied enough despite his relevance as a composer and a thinker within the European post-tonal music of the 20th century. During the Spanish dictatorship of Franco, Gerhard did not receive any official attention. It was not until he passed away (1970), two years after he received the honorary doctorate from Cambridge University, that his life and work, as well as his reception, became a subject in the musicological research community. Since then, research on the composer has been multiplying. In the United Kingdom, the works of Monty Adkins (2013, 2017), Meirion Bowen (2000), David Drew (1993, 2002), Michael Russ (2013, 2017), Julian White (1993, 2010) and Trevor Walshaw (2020)¹ emerge, and in the USA, the works of Mark Perry

¹ ADKINS, Monty, & RUSS, Michael (Eds.). *The Roberto Gerhard Companion*. Ashgate (2013); BOWEN, Meirion (Ed.) *Gerhard on Music*. Ashgate (2000); ADKINS, M. & RUSS, M. (Eds.) *Essays on Roberto Gerhard*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing (2017); DREW, David. Notes on Gerhard's *Pandora*. *Tempo (New Series)* 184 (1993), pp. 14–16; DREW, D. Roberto Gerhard: Aspekte einer Physiognomie. *Musik-Konzepte (Arnold Schönbergs 'Berliner Schule')* (2002), pp. 117–18; WHITE, Julian. Lament and Laughter: Emotional Responses to Exile in Gerhard's Post-Civil War Works', *of the 1st International Roberto Gerhard Conference*, 37. University of Huddersfield Press (2010); WHITE, J. National Traditions in the Music of Roberto Gerhard. *Tempo*, 184, pp. 2-13. Cambridge University Press (1993); WALSHAW, Trevor. Roberto Gerhard and the ballet Don Quixote: Extending the Myth. *Quodlibet*, 73 (2020), pp. 203-231.

(2013) and Rachel Mitchell (2010)² stand out. In Spain, in addition to the written and musical legacy of Joaquim Homs (2007)³, a pupil of Gerhard himself, we have the contributions on Gerhard from Alonso (2010, 2011), Buide (2010), Casablanças (1999), Castillo (2020), Duque (2010, 2011), Gan (2014, 2020), García Karman (2014), Llano (2012), Mestres Quadrenys (2015), Moreda (2015), Ortiz-de-Urbina (2019, 2020), Polo (2015), Sánchez de Andrés (2013) and Ullate I Estanyol (1996)⁴. In Germany, Gabriela Lendle (2015)⁵ has produced interesting studies on the composer. In terms of libraries and archives, it is worth highlighting the work done by the Cambridge Library of the University of Cambridge and the Institut d'Estudis Vallencs from Valls, as both institutions house the composer's legacy, safeguarding it and making it available to researchers. Finally, the creation of the Quartet Gerhard in 2010, specialising in the repertoire of the Catalan composer and its growing success to date, is also proof of the growing interest, not only by the musicological community, but also by performers and the Spanish public in concert halls. As far as the study of the composer's correspondence is concerned, it is noteworthy that the correspondence of Roberto Gerhard with other musicians is only mentioned in relation to his pupil Joaquim Homs or casually in individual academic

² PERRY, Mark E. Early Works and Life of Roberto Gerhard. Adkins, M., & Russ, M. (Eds.). *The Roberto Gerhard Companion*. Ashgate (2013); MITCHELL, R. Form and function in Roberto Gerhard's String Quartet no. 1. *Proceedings of the 1st International Roberto Gerhard Conference*. University of Huddersfield Press (2010), pp. 62-72.

³ HOMS, J. *Robert Gerhard and his Music*. In M. Bowen (Ed.). *The Anglo-Catalan Society* (2000); HOMS, P. (Ed.). *Joaquim Homs. Trayectoria, pensamiento y reflexiones*. Ediciones Autor (2007).

⁴ ALONSO, Diego. A Breathtaking Adventure: Gerhard's Musical Education under Arnold Schönberg. In *Proceedings of the 1st International Roberto Gerhard Conference* (2010), pp. 9-21. University of Huddersfield Press; ALONSO, D. *La formación musical de Roberto Gerhard* [Doctoral dissertation, Universidad de La Rioja] (2011); Buide, Fernando. Unity and process in Roberto Gerhard's Symphony n° 3 'Collages'. *Proceedings of the 1st International Roberto Gerhard Conference*, University of Huddersfield Press (2010), pp. 101-06; CASABLANÇAS I DOMINGO, Benet. La música catalana i les avant-guardes europees (1916-1938). *Les avantguardes a Catalunya* (1999), pp. 47-57. Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat; CASTILLO, Belén. Sobre nacionalismos, estéticas y omisiones capciosas: Roberto Gerhard en la bibliografía musical durante el periodo franquista (1943-1974). *Quodlibet*, 73 (2020), pp. 172-202; DUQUE, Carlos. Gerhard's Electronic Music: A Pioneer in Constant Evolution. *Proceedings of the 1st International Roberto Gerhard Conference*. University of Huddersfield Press (2010), pp. 87-97; DUQUE, C. *Compositional Techniques, Borrowed Materials and Electronic Metamorphoses. Symphony 4 'New York' by Roberto Gerhard*. London, City University (2011); GAN QUESADA, Germán. La recepción de la música de Robert Gerhard a Catalunya durant el Franquisme (1948-1970): trobades i desavinences. *Revista catalana de musicologia* (2014), pp. 153-171; GAN QUESADA, G. Gerhard, en clave catalana. *Scherzo* 35 (2020), pp. 74-76; GARCÍA KARMAN, Gregorio. *Roberto Gerhard's Sound Compositions: A Historical-Philological Perspective. Archive, Process, Intent and reenactment* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Huddersfield] (2014); LLANO, Samuel. Polifonías del exilio: disidencia y heteroglosia en *Flamenco* (1943) de Robert Gerhard. L. SÁNCHEZ DE ANDRÉS & A. PRESAS (Eds.), *Música, Ciencia y Pensamiento en España e Iberoamérica durante el siglo XX*. Servicio de Publicaciones UAM (2012), pp. 372-97; MOREDA, Eva. *Music and Exile in Francoist Spain*. Farnham, Ashgate. (2015); ORTIZ-DE-URBINA SOBRINO, Paloma (2019). El mundo mítico de la 'Cueva de Montesinos' en la música para Don Quixote de Roberto Gerhard. *Anales Cervantinos*, 51, pp. 125-146; ORTIZ-DE-URBINA, P. Roberto Gerhard, cincuenta años después. Monograph on Roberto Gerhard. *Quodlibet* 73 (2020), pp. 81-89; POLO PUJADAS, Magda. & J.M. MESTRES QUADRENY, José María. From Valls to Cambridge: Roberto Gerhard's Musical Aesthetics. M. RUSS & M. ADKINS (Eds.), *Perspectives on Gerhard*. University of Huddersfield Press (2015), pp. 1-11; SÁNCHEZ DE ANDRÉS, L. *Pasión, desarraigo y literatura. El compositor Roberto Gerhard*. Fundación Scherzo (2013); ULLATE I ESTANYOL, Margarida. El fondo de manuscritos no musicales de Roberto Gerhard en la Biblioteca de la Universidad de Cambridge. *Boletín de la Asociación Española de Documentación Musical (AEDOM)*, 3(1) (1996), pp. 20-48.

⁵ LENDLE, Gabriela. Zwölftontechnik als neue Form von Tonalität. Zu Roberto Gerhards quixotischem Code. *Beihefte zum Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 76. Franz Steiner Verlag (2015).

articles⁶. This is especially striking if we bear in mind that the relationship between Roberto Gerhard and his teacher since 1923, the already famous Arnold Schoenberg, was decisive in the former's professional career. In contrast to the more than 20.000 letters written and sent by Arnold Schoenberg identified by the Arnold Schoenberg Center⁷, and despite the publication of some individual letters between both composers⁸, the complete correspondence between the two musicians was not published until 2019 by the author of this article. The letters were first published in German (2019)⁹ and then translated into Catalan (2020)¹⁰ and English (2020)¹¹. This article will refer in its citations to the latter English version. The author of this article is currently preparing her version of the book in Spanish¹².

An initial analysis of the letters between Arnold Schoenberg and his pupil Roberto Gerhard reveals interesting aspects in the life, work, and personality of both composers. It also provides relevant biographical information, such as the close relationship between the two musicians' families thanks to the active mediation of both wives; the importance of Schoenberg's stay in Barcelona from October 1931 to June 1932; and Gerhard's desperate attempt to secure binding contracts for Schoenberg in Spain, with the help of Pau Casals and other Spanish musicians, so that the Viennese master, who was in danger due to the increasing anti-Semitism in Germany from 1932 onwards, could permanently move to Barcelona with his wife and child. This collection of documents also sheds light on the creative process behind some of the composers' work, as we will see below.

2. Letter's sources and chronological period

After eight years of work, 82 letters between Schoenberg and Gerhard were identified through different sources, which were found in different international archives: Akademie der Künste, Berlin (Germany), Cambridge University Library, Roberto Gerhard Archives, Cambridge (United Kingdom), Institut d'Estudis Vallencs, Fons Roberto Gerhard, Valls, Tarragona (Spain), Library of Congress, Washington (USA), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna (Austria) and Berlin State Library, Berlin (Germany).

⁶ RIBÉ, Ramón/ HOMS, Pietat. *Robert Gerhard, Joaquim Homs. Correspondència*. Cossetània Edicions (2015).

⁷ Vid. Arnold Schönberg Center (ASC) web page: <http://www.Schönberg.at/index.php/en/>, where you can visit the letter's archive from Arnold Schönberg. The ASC strives to locate all sources that pertain to the work of Arnold Schönberg. The correspondence's database contains more than 20.000 pieces to and from Schönberg that have been identified from a large variety of sources.

⁸ The most important example of this is the publication of Gerhard's first letter to Schönberg. It was translated into Catalan for the first time by Miquel Taverna Homs (the grandson of Gerhard's student Joaquim Homs) and was published in Barcelona in 1996: JAUME BUSQUÉ I BARCELÓ (ed.), *Centenari Robert Gerhard (1896-1996)*. Barcelona, Generalitat de Catalunya (1996), pp. 22-26. The letter was then translated into English by MEIRION BOWEN and published in Bowen's work *Robert Gerhard and his music*, Sheffield 2000, pp. 91-94. JOSÉ MARÍA LABORDA also included an extract of this letter in Spanish in his work: "Roberto Gerhard: Carta a Schönberg" in *La música moderna y contemporánea a través de los escritos de sus protagonistas*. Seville, Doble J, 2004, pp. 130-133. DIEGO ALONSO published a nearly complete translation of the letter into Spanish in his dissertation: "La creación musical de Roberto Gerhard durante el magisterio de Arnold Schönberg: neoclasicismo, octatonismo y organización proto-serial (1923-1928)". Directed by Prof. María Pilar Ramos López. Universidad de la Rioja (2014-2015), pp. 321-325.

⁹ ORTIZ-DE-URBINA, P. *Arnold Schönberg und Roberto Gerhard. Briefwechsel. Kritische Ausgabe*. Peter Lang (2019).

¹⁰ ORTIZ-DE-URBINA, P. *Robert Gerhard i Arnold Schönberg: Correspondència*. Biblioteca de Catalunya (2020).

¹¹ ORTIZ-DE-URBINA, P. *Arnold Schönberg and Roberto Gerhard. Correspondence*. Biblioteca de Catalunya (2020).

¹² The Spanish version will be published in the next months by the Spanish publisher Akal Música.

The process of collecting data and preparing the material, as well as deciphering, transcribing, cataloguing and classifying the letters, were complex tasks: on one hand, the documents came from different geographical sources; and, on the other, the same documents were often available in several versions, which required not only the identification of the original, but also, in the case of copies, the recognition of the type of copy (carbon copy, photocopy, etc.). Although many of the documents were catalogued with the help of the copies found in the Arnold Schoenberg Center (such as the letters of the Library of Congress in Washington), many other documents from other different countries had to be consulted *in situ*, such as the correspondence stored at the IEV (Institut d'Estudis Vallencs, Tarragona), the documents from the Cambridge University Library, the letters and postcards from the Berlin State Library and other documents from the Music Department of the Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Vienna.

The edited letters cover the period between October 1923 and 1965. The first letter Roberto Gerhard sent to Arnold Schoenberg is from October 23rd, 1923; the last letter between the two, written by the already ill Schoenberg, is dated April 11th, 1951, three months before the death of the Austrian composer on July 13th of the same year. Although my original intention was to stick to this period, the unexpected discovery of correspondence between Schoenberg's widow, Gertrud Schoenberg, and the Gerhards (Gertrud Schoenberg Collection in the Arnold Schoenberg Center¹³) after the Master passed away confirmed the hypothesis that the wives played a more significant role in the relationship between the two composers beyond Schoenberg's death than what had previously been thought. From that point onwards, they did not only keep on with the family relationship but continued to cultivate it. Their letters brought new historical data to the biographies of both composers. In addition, both women had been constantly and actively involved in the conversations between the two musicians since 1931, which justifies the inclusion of their correspondences in the published correspondence.

3. Sender and recipients of the letters

The edition of the Schoenberg-Gerhard letters referred exclusively to those senders and recipients who are closely linked to the correspondence between Schoenberg and Gerhard, specifically the cellist Pau Casals and the families of both musicians: Roberto Gerhard; Poldi Gerhard (the Viennese Leopoldine Feichtegger, Roberto Gerhard's wife since 1930); the mother of Roberto Gerhard (Maria Ottenwaelder, who married Gerhard's father in 1893); Arnold Schoenberg; Gertrud Schoenberg (the Viennese Gertrud Kolisch, Schoenberg's second wife from 1924); Nuria Schoenberg-Nono (first child of Arnold and Gertrud Schoenberg, born in Barcelona in 1932) and Georg Schoenberg (son of Schoenberg's first marriage with Mathilde Zemlinsky, who died in 1923). Regarding the letters written by or to Pau Casals, I only considered those documents in which Roberto Gerhard directly acts as a mediator between Schoenberg and the Catalan cellist.

With regards to the letters between the Schoenbergs and the Gerhards, it is worth mentioning the following: the messages that Gertrud and Arnold Schoenberg sent to Gerhard's mother (confirming, thus, the close friendship between the two families); the messages between the two wives, Gertrud Schoenberg and Poldi Gerhard; the letters exchanged between the Gerhards and Schoenberg's son, Georg¹⁴; and the letters exchanged

¹³ It consists of 10 documents that were found in the Satellite Collecton S4 at the Arnold Schönberg Center in Vienna. The letters came from Schönberg's house in Los Angeles (USA).

¹⁴ Geog Schönberg (1906-1964) was the first child from Schönberg's first marriage with Mathilde, who was the sister of his teacher, Alexander Zemlinsky. Their marriage took place in 1877 and was terminated on the

between the Gerhards and the daughter from Schoenberg's second marriage, Nuria¹⁵. During the intensive search for Gerhard's correspondence, several letters were also found, which show the Spanish musician's close relationship with other important musicians of the Viennese School, such as Anton Webern or Alban Berg¹⁶.

4. Analysis results

4.1. New data on biographical information

Gerhard was born on 25 September 1896 in the Tarragona town of Valls to a Swiss father and an Alsatian mother. At the age of twelve, he left for Switzerland to attend secondary school, where he remained until the end of 1913; he then went to Munich in April 1914 to study music, but the outbreak of the First World War meant that he had to return to Spain five months later, settling in Barcelona and studying first with Enrique Granados (until his death in 1916) and then with Felipe Pedrell, with whom he studied until 1920. After two years of seclusion to compose in the family farmhouse in Valls, on 1 October 1923, plunged into a personal and professional crisis and seeking new paths, he took a courageous decision: he wrote a long letter to an avant-garde Austrian composer, then hardly known in Spain, to ask him to accept him as a pupil. It was none other than the Viennese composer Arnold Schoenberg, who was at that time developing a revolutionary method that would completely change the musical language of the 20th century: Dodecaphonism. After receiving his positive response, Gerhard immediately and enthusiastically set off for Austria to be taught by the master, who was teaching at his residence in Mödling, a town some 20 kilometres south of Vienna, and who already had pupils such as Alban Berg and Anton Webern. In Vienna Gerhard would meet Leopoldine Feichtegger, whom he would marry in 1930, a young woman who would soon become a close friend of Gertrud Schoenberg, also from Vienna, the Austrian maestro's second wife. In 1926, Gerhard would follow his master to Berlin, where, after the death of Ferruccio Busoni Schoenberg, Schoenberg was called to replace him at the head of what today we would call the Masterclass in Composition (then called Meisterklasse für musikalische Komposition) at the Berlin Academy of the Arts. He thus became one of its famous disciples or Meisterschüler, alongside composers of the stature of Adolph Weiss, Erich Schmid, Josef Rufer, Josef Zwmgrod, Walter Goehr, Walter Gronostay and Winfried Zillig. After these intense Berlin years, Gerhard and his wife returned to Barcelona at the beginning of 1929, and in 1931 the Schoenbergs moved to Barcelona, thanks to the intermediation of the Gerhards, who, together with the cellist Pau Casals, gave him a memorable greeting in Barcelona, where many Catalan composers of the time gave him a warm welcome. The Schoenbergs were very happy in Barcelona, as the Austrian maestro's correspondence shows, for there the musician, who composed part of his opera *Moses und Aaron*, was pampered and entertained by the musical milieu, as well as enjoying the affection and family support of the Gerhard family. In Barcelona, Gertrud Schoenberg gave birth to their first daughter, whom they named Nuria (later Luigi Nono's wife). In 1932 the Schoenbergs returned to Germany and, threatened by the already reigning anti-Semitism, expressed by letter their desire to flee Germany to settle in their beloved

day of her death in 1923. Ten months after the death of Mathilde, Schönberg married Gertrud, Rudolf Kolisch's sister.

¹⁵ Nuria Schönberg-Nono was born the 7 May 1932 in Barcelona. She later married the Italian composer Luigi Nono in 1955.

¹⁶ Due to their documentary significance, the letters between Roberto Gerhard and Webern and Berg will soon be published by the author of this article.

Barcelona; however, despite Gerhard's efforts to find binding contracts for Schoenberg, they finally made the maestro decide to go to the United States, where he would end his life, settling in Los Angeles, from where he would continue to teach his compositional techniques and from where he would continue to write to Gerhard until his death. At the end of the Civil War, Gerhard settled with his wife in Cambridge, where (as Schoenberg did in the USA) he would eventually obtain citizenship, as well as official recognition from that country, which awarded him the rank of Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1967 and the title of Doctor Honoris Causa from Cambridge University in 1968, two years before his death.

The analysis of the letters collected confirms that Roberto Gerhard was a unique composer, a citizen of the world, a polyglot, a man of exquisite culture, a great literary reader, a connoisseur of classical culture and a student of the philosophical currents of the time. From his birth in Valls until his death in Cambridge, Gerhard lived in numerous European cities, using their languages, and imbibing their world views. He grew up as a child in Valls, pursued his secondary and higher education in Zofingen, Neuchâtel and Lausanne (Switzerland) and began his musical studies in Munich (Germany). After the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 he settled in Barcelona, where he continued his training as a composer and continued it from 1923 to 1925 in Vienna (Austria) and from 1926 to 1929 in Berlin (Germany), returning to Barcelona that year and going into exile at the end of the Civil War, in 1939, to Cambridge (England), where he lived until his death on 5 January 1970. These experiences made Gerhard a true citizen of the world, a polyglot (he was fluent in Spanish, Catalan, German, and English), both orally and in writing (a fact that is documented in the edition of his correspondence), had a good knowledge of French and was a connoisseur not only of the languages he mastered, but also of the culture of all of them.

Gerhard's first letter to Schoenberg (Fig. 1), with which the epistolary exchange begins, written from Valls on 21 October 1923 is already a biographical testimony of the first order, providing information on the Catalan composer's musical training up to 1923, on his personality and on the Spanish cultural networks of the time. It is a true confession, a desperate cry for help from a young 26-year-old Spanish musician amid an existential crisis, for whom Arnold Schoenberg represented a real lifeline.

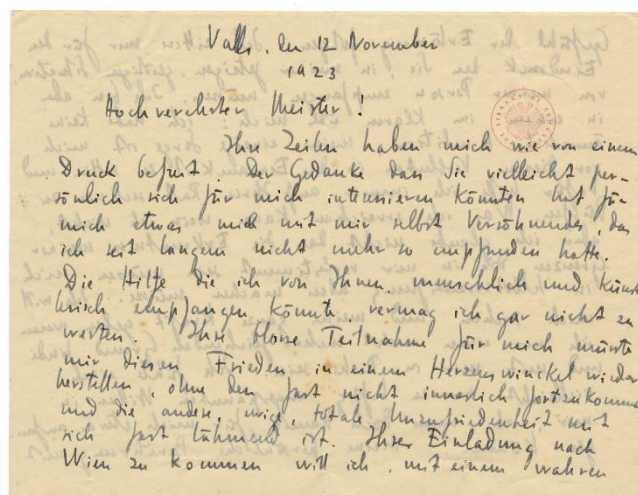


Fig.1. Gerhard's first letter to Arnold Schoenberg on 21 October 1923. Source: Cambridge University Library.

This first letter provides information about Gerhard's personality, maturity, lucidity, intellectual capacity, wide-ranging culture, and early international openness. The letter

shows us an honest, humble, and authentic musician who longs to improve by learning, a perfectionist and ambitious composer who is capable, despite his youth, of secluding himself in a farmhouse in the middle of the countryside to focus on his work and who, unlike most of his contemporaries, who seek guidance from Spanish or French masters, wishes to explore new avenues further afield: in German avant-garde music. In his search for method and analysis, Gerhard takes a giant step forward by daring to ask for help from an already famous and revolutionary Austrian composer, the creator of a revolutionary musical language based on series of twelve notes, which will open the door to the later development of serialism in Western music in the second half of the 20th century: Arnold Schoenberg. It is interesting to note that Roberto Gerhard is the only Spanish composer with the privilege of belonging to the *Wiener Schule* or Viennese School, created by the Austrian composer Arnold Schoenberg, which is often mistakenly called the Second Viennese School¹⁷. Gerhard was thus one of the members of the Vienna School and one of Schoenberg's famous disciples, the so-called *Meisterschüler* or disciples of the Master, belonging to his second generation. The first generation of this school was formed by Alban Berg and Anton Webern who, in turn, taught dodecaphonic techniques to other composers, as was the case with Theodor Von Adorno (a pupil of Alban Berg). To the second generation belong Hanns Eisler, Joseph Rufer, Erwin Stein, Egon Wellesz in Vienna; Nikos Skalkottas, Winfried Zillig, Walter Goehr, Adolf Weiss, Josef Zwigrod in Berlin and Roberto Gerhard, who was a pupil of Schoenberg both in Vienna and Berlin between 1923 and 1928. All the above composers were united in some way in a collaborative effort to make known the new serialist compositional methods of the Viennese master. The third generation of the Austrian master corresponds to his American period, where he taught composers such as John Cage.

This important biographical and musicological testimony, written from young Catalan Gerhard to already famous Schoenberg begins with the following words:

Valls, 21 October 1923

Most revered Master!

I really do not know where I can find the courage, in my spiritual depression, to turn to you, if not from the belief of finding advice, in your artistry and deep humanity, which will bring me greater self-enlightenment than any further despair might achieve [...]¹⁸.

This first very long letter that Gerhard sent to Schoenberg, therefore, reached the maestro only a few days after the death of his then-wife, Mathilde Zemlinsky¹⁹, who died on 18 October 1923. Despite this, on 4 November, Schoenberg replied to Gerhard briefly but affirmatively, and the Catalan musician immediately and enthusiastically left for

¹⁷ It could be argued that the adjective second is not correct, as it presupposes a first school of pupils of another composer in Vienna, when what we call the First Viennese School actually refers to a group of European composers (Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven and, in part, Franz Schubert) who lived at some point in Vienna and who shared certain stylistic traits, but who were not pupils belonging to the school of any one composer. In German, this group of musicians of the late 18th and early 19th century is called *Wiener Klassik*, i.e., Viennese Classicism, and the school created by Arnold Schönberg in the 20th century tends to be more and more frequently referred to today as the *Wiener Schule*, i.e. simply the Vienna School.

¹⁸ ORTIZ-DE-URBINA, P., Arnold Schönberg and..., p. 35.

¹⁹ Mathilde Zemlinsky (1887-1923) was the sister of one of Schönberg's few music teachers: Alexander von Zemlinsky. On 7 October 1901, Schönberg married Mathilde. They had two children, Gertrud (1902-1947) and Georg (1906-1974). After the death of Mathilde on 18 October 1923 in Mödling, Schönberg married Gertrud Kolisch, the sister of his student Rudolf Kolisch, on 28 August 1924. With her, he had three children: Nuria (1932-), Ronald (1937-), and Lawrence (1941).

Vienna, but not before sending him a letter that demonstrates the impact of Schoenberg's reply and how it would change the course of his life:

Dear Master!

Your lines have relieved me of a pressure. The thought that you might be interested in me personally has caused something in me that reconciles me with myself. A feeling I had not had for a long time.

I cannot even put a value on the help which I could receive from you, humanly and artistically. For me, your mere participation would restore this peace in a corner of my heart, without which it would be almost impossible to get on. And the eternal, total dissatisfaction is almost paralysing. I will accept your invitation to come to Vienna with a true feeling of salvation²⁰.

The epistolary exchange ceased on 28 August 1924, the day Schoenberg met Gertrud Kolisch, Rudolf Kolisch's sister, at the Evangelical Church in Mödling, and resumed in April 1925, following Arnold Schoenberg's concerts in Barcelona and Gerona. In 1925, wishing to introduce Schoenberg's work to Catalonia, Gerhard arranged from Vienna the premiere in Barcelona of *Pierrot lunaire* and other works by Schoenberg with the Barcelona Chamber Music Association, to be conducted by Arnold Schoenberg himself. This concert was held at the Palau de la Música Catalana on 29 April 1925. The concert caused great excitement in Barcelona and provoked, according to Joaquim Homs (1991), "a real scandal, as was often the case in other European cities"²¹ and sparked a growing interest in the composer.

On 10 January 1926, Arnold Schoenberg moves to Berlin, where he is offered the position of head of the composition masterclass at the Akademie der Künste, Academy of the Arts, and with him, his pupils Roberto Gerhard, Winfried Zillig, Josef Rufer, and his first American pupil Adolph Weiss. Walter Goehr joins the composition classes. These pupils will become 'special' pupils, *Meisterschüler*, which makes them very proud.

So, Gerhard settles in Berlin as well, with the aim of continuing Schoenberg's lessons and remains there until halfway through 1928, when he left for composing in the Austrian town Tulln an der Donau. In December 1928, he moves first to Valls and then to Barcelona, where he becomes a teacher at the Escuela Normal de la Generalitat. There he meets his former Austrian pupil Poldi Feichtegger again and marries her in 1930.

On 15 April 1931, the Second Spanish Republic is proclaimed. On the occasion of the events celebrating the proclamation of the Republic, Pau Casals conducts the Orchestra Pau Casals and the Orfeó Gracienc in a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at the Palau de Montjuïc in Barcelona. La República reflects the work and the new critical awareness that had begun around the 1920s, with the start of the musical activity of the Generation of '27. The first positive change to the credit of the Republic was the expression of a musical conscience, with the government recognising, perhaps for the first time, the social importance of music. The Junta Nacional de Música (National Music Board) was created, made up, among others, of musicians of the stature of Oscar Esplá, Adolfo Salazar, Ernesto Halffter and Salvador Bacarisse. The first anniversary of the Junta is celebrated with a ceremony attended by Fernando de los Ríos, Indalecio Prieto, Miguel de Unamuno, Federico García Lorca, Salvador de Madariaga, Pedro Salinas, Antonio Machado, Manuel Azaña, José Ortega y Gasset and Jacinto Benavente, among others, which can be interpreted as a sign that music had managed to connect with the Spanish intelligentsia of the time²².

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

²¹ HOMS, J. (1991). *Robert Gerhard i la seva obra*. Biblioteca de Catalunya. Original quote: "La obra [...] provocà aleshores un veritable escàndol, como solía succeir també en altres ciutats d'Europa", p. 41.

²² *Vid.* CASARES RODICIO, E. (1983), *Música y músicos de la Generación del 27*. Alianza, p. 33.

4.2. Linguistic aspects: Language and style

One of the most important facts in the exchange of letters between Gerhard and Schoenberg is the language chosen. Most of the documents were written in German: namely, 66 of the 82 letters submitted; 14 letters were written in English, one in French and another one in Catalan.

Both composers had to flee into exile to an English-speaking country: due to the persecution of Jews, Schoenberg left Europe in 1933 and settled first in Boston and then in Los Angeles up until he died; Gerhard left Spain after the Spanish Civil War in 1939, because he was a Republican, and settled in Cambridge until his death. For these reasons, since 1944, some letters were written in English. Nevertheless, the common language was always German because they met in Vienna. Their relationship is clearly marked by the deep friendship between their wives, who are both from Vienna and who, as I will explain, actively take part in the correspondence.

With regards to Roberto Gerhard's use of the German language, it is worth noting his correct style since the musician was born in Valls (Spain). Despite his parents' origin (his father was Swiss-German, and his mother was Alsatian), German was not his mother tongue. Gerhard did not attend a German-speaking school until he was twelve years old, when he began a commercial apprenticeship in Switzerland. In his first letter to the Viennese master, he humbly points this out: "The German language causes me much difficulty, I still have to translate too much, so as to find the true expression for my thoughts and feelings"²³.

Additionally, one can notice that Gerhard makes frequent orthographic Helvetisms (such as the absence of the "sharp ß", the so-called Eszett) and there is also presence of the Viennese dialect when the Schoenbergs or Poldi have taken part in the correspondence. In a letter from September 3rd, 1934, Poldi writes to Arnold, Gertrud and Nuria Schoenberg (also called "Nurtscherl" on many occasions) longing about this: "I would probably like to speak Austrian again"²⁴.

An interesting postcard in French dated September 3rd, 1932, is also published. It was sent by the Schoenbergs to the Gerhards, and it is encoded and signed with the pseudonym *Artrudor Belmonte*, a wordplay with their first names Arnold and Gertrud, and the translation of the name "Schoenberg" into Italian: Schön (beautiful) + Berg (mountain) = Belmonte:

Dear Mr. Gerard,

It has been about 15 days since my wife and I wrote a letter to you and your wife. In that letter, we included a receipt from the post office in Barcelona for the "certificado" letter. We believe it was lost; we had also included the ten Schilling note to your brother. As you have not yet replied, we are concerned that this letter could have also been stolen and we ask you to write to us immediately; we have sent this "registered" letter. With our best regards, your

p. A. Artrudor Belmonte²⁵.

Finally, we find an important document written by Pau Casals in Catalan: it is a welcome letter for Schoenberg on the occasion of his arrival in Barcelona in October 1931 signed, not only by Casals and Roberto Gerhard, but also by 16 other musicians of the Catalan scene at the time: Higiní Anglès Pàmies, Concepció Badia Millàs, Josep Barberà Humbert, Pau Casals Defilló, Francesc Costa Carrera, Joan Lamote de Grignon Bocquet, Ricard Lamote de Grignon Ribas, Joan Llongueres Badia, Lluís Millet Pagès, Jaume

²³ ORTIZ-DE-URBINA, P., *Arnold Schönberg and...*, p. 40.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

Pahissa, Joaquim Pena Costa, Marian(o) Perelló, Francesc Pujol Pons, Josep Sabater Sust, Baltasar Samper and Eduard Toldrà²⁶.

4.3. The relevance of Schoenberg's stay in Barcelona

The emptying of the correspondence clearly shows the importance of the Schoenbergs' stay in Barcelona from October 1931 to June 1932 and how it strengthened the bonds of friendship between two marriages: that between Gertrud and Arnold Schoenberg and the union between Poldi and Roberto Gerhard. Barcelona was a fulfilling home and a desired refuge for the Schoenbergs.

Arnold Schoenberg wrote a letter to Roberto Gerhard from Territet (Montreux) on September 16th, 1931, asking him to help him find an apartment in Barcelona because of his health:

I have been coughing again for quite some time and the doctor who examined me here thinks that I should definitely spend a winter in the south, in dry³³ warm. I had previously thought of Spain. Yet I know nothing about its climate in this respect. If you could tell me more about [...]²⁷.

Roberto and Poldi Gerhard make great efforts to find a suitable apartment for the Schoenbergs, who finally arrive in Barcelona with their dog Witzi and the maid Martha at the beginning of October 1931. The Schoenbergs moved to a house at Bajada de Briz, 14, in the Vallcarca quarter of Barcelona²⁸.

As the correspondence shows, Schoenberg's stay in Barcelona was one of the happiest periods of his life (Fig. 2). There, he found the necessary peace for his compositions (he wrote there the Piano piece Op. 33b and finished the second act of *Moses and Aron*), the professional recognition and affection of the Spanish music scene (as the welcome letter at the beginning of October from Pau Casals, signed by Gerhard and 16 other Catalan musicians proves). His first daughter with Gertrud was born in Barcelona on May 7th, 1932 and they named her Nuria, a very Catalan name. In addition, his friendship with Roberto Gerhard and his wife Poldi, which lasted until his death, was strengthened.



²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

Fig. 2. Roberto Gerhard, Poldi Gerhard, Matilde Maristany, Gertrud Schoenberg, Arnold Schoenberg at Maristany's house, St Pere de Ribes, Barcelona, 1932. Source: Arnold Schoenberg Center.

Schoenberg extended his stay in Spain until the end of May. At the beginning of June 1932, however, he had to return to Berlin and continued teaching there. Nevertheless, the pressure of anti-Semitism in Germany's political climate increased steadily, and, as can be seen from a letter dated November 15th of the same year, Schoenberg was then already planning to return to Barcelona. He needed "binding contracts" and asked Gerhard to "do something regarding this":

Dear Mr. Gerhard,

[...] When will I –we– come back? According to my contract, I could travel on the 1st of December but it might be wiser for me to stay in Berlin as long as I am healthy. We plan to stay in Berlin non-stop until the end of January. Then I have some lectures (Vienna, Brünn and Frankfurt) and a concert on the radio on the 8th in London. I am in the process of determining the dates of this trip. I will probably go to London first, then from there via Frankfurt to Brünn and Vienna and from there possibly to Spain. Possibly: that means, if there are enough concerts and lectures (in German, French or English, because I will not be able to speak Spanish fluently enough!!!). This year I have to consider the difficulties of the currency freeze even more than last year and, in Spain, I would mainly have to live off what I earn there. 3. Therefore, it would be necessary for the invitations to concerts, etc. to be offered to me quite soon with completely binding proposals²⁹ and I would be grateful if you would do something regarding this³⁰.

Despite Gerhard's desperate attempt to agree binding contracts for Schoenberg in Barcelona, with the help of Pau Casals and other Spanish musicians, on the 25th of October, the Austrian master left Europe and arrived in New York³¹ on the 31st of the same month. Gerhard, who was unaware of Schoenberg's new situation, still tries to set up concerts for Schoenberg in Spain and establishes contacts with Daniel (Kolisch's agent) and Enrique Fernández Arbós (conductor of the Symphonic Orchestra of Madrid). On the 5th of November, Gerhard learns from the press that Schoenberg is in the USA. The Catalan composer tells him, frustrated, that he found, unfortunately too late, binding contracts for Schoenberg in Spain:

Just now, for example, I have received from Madrid an offer for a concert and a lecture for you with a fee of 2,500 ptas. It is the society of the Symphonic Orchestra from Madrid. It is directed by E. Fernández-Arbós, with whom I exchanged correspondence after the negotiations with Daniel had become hopeless³².

4.4. The 'Monn Concerto': Gerhard, Schoenberg, and Pau Casals

On the other hand, some letters from this period reveal new information³³ about the episode of the so-called Monn Concerto, a piece for violoncello and orchestra D-major that Schoenberg wrote for Pau Casals after a concerto by Georg Matthias Monn (1717-1750). The underlying idea was that Casals would premiere the concert with Schoenberg himself in Barcelona in the autumn of 1933 (Fig. 3).

²⁹ Original underlining.

³⁰ ORTIZ-DE-URBINA, P., *Arnold Schönberg and...*, p. 81.

³¹ Schönberg taught at the Malkin Conservatory in Boston and New York and finally moved to Los Angeles in 1936 to taught at the University of California, where he stayed until his death.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 129.

³³ A first and excellent approach to the letters sent between Schönberg and Casals, thanks to Gerhard's intermediation, was published by José María LABORDA, in an extensive article (in which numerous original letters are published) in the *Revista de Musicología* XXIII, I, (2000), pp. 187-218.



Fig. 3. Postcard from Schoenberg to Gerhard dated 18 January 1933, in which he presents the Monn Concerto to him and asks him to try to convince Pau Casals to hold the premiere of the concerto in Barcelona.

The premiere of the concerto by Casals was to provide prestige and binding contracts for Schoenberg in Barcelona and secure his future maintenance in Spain. Therefore, Schoenberg urged Gerhard, who acted as mediator between the two, to put pressure on Casals to practice the concerto as quickly as possible.

While Gerhard urged Casals and made numerous contacts in Catalonia and Madrid to be able to offer Schoenberg binding contracts, Schoenberg travelled to Paris on the 16th of May 1933 and lived with his wife and his baby in the Hotel Régina. Gerhard, who was unaware of this, confirmed the Casals concerto and other activities on the 25th of May and even discussed the fees:

Regarding your concerts in Spain in the upcoming autumn, I can assure you that, in Barcelona, the concerts with Casals, in Barcelona at the Adlan Society and the performance at the Conferentia Club are, without doubt, fixed³⁴. Your fees with Casals would be the same as last year; the ones with Adlan's would be 1,000 ptas each³⁵.

Two days later, Schoenberg told Gerhard from Paris that he had been officially dismissed and that he, full of sorrow, had already informed of this Casals and Joaquim Pena:

Dear Friend, yesterday I received the long awaited "leave of absence" from the academy, which is another term for "dismissal". So far, nothing has been said regarding my contractual duties. It would be pretty bad for me at first if I do not get my salary, but I very much hope that the clear provisions of my contract will not be violated [...?]. You will understand that I now want to know what will happen with my future concerts with more urgency than ever. I wrote to you a few days ago. I wrote to Pena and Casals, too. It is not an easy decision for me; from Spain, all the negotiations from which I can expect to earn an income are very difficult, not only because of the distance but also because of the irregularity of the post. Otherwise, I would already be there by now! But, first, if I went to Spain without any commitment, I would have to sell my cello concerto, my opera and my drama *Der biblische Weg* to the publishers, because I would have to get some security somehow³⁶.

Gerhard writes back on the 27th of June and tells him that unfortunately Casals will not "master the work" before the spring season in 1934 despite his hard practice, and,

³⁴ Original underlining.

³⁵ ORTIZ-DE-URBINA, P., *Arnold Schönberg and...*, p. 118.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

therefore, the organised concert cannot take place after all. On July 20th, Schoenberg responds to such bad news with “dismay”³⁷.

4.5. Schoenberg's family in danger and the call for help to Gerhard

In this same letter, there is another sobering piece of information that Schoenberg communicates. The Viennese Master desperately asks Gerhard to save both his son Georg (his first child from his first marriage with Mathilde Zemlinsky) and his wife and four-year-old daughter from the Nazi danger. He suggests that his friends in Spain could offer Georg a job, even if it is as a copyist for Gerhard or Maristany or helping Msg. Angles. He reminds Gerhard that he once told him in Barcelona that “the descendants of emigrated Spanish Jews were welcomed in Spain”: The Sephardic Jews had, apparently, some privileges in Spain:

I think he will gradually be able to earn some money in Spain as a musician or something. Maybe we can get him a small job after all? But maybe I will send him to Jerusalem. You can do quite well from there, too. I am counting on Spain, however. You have told me that descendants of emigrated Spanish Jews have certain privileges in Spain. His grandmother on his mother's side is a Sephardic Jew; first, he would have to get the relevant papers. Since his grandfather on his mother's side was a Christian, he is not a pure Jew. He was brought up as a Christian as well. However, that will hardly be an obstacle. He could, by the way, initially copy notes for free for you or for Maristany so that he has something to do. Do you think that perhaps Msg. Angles will occasionally need someone to copy notes for him?³⁸.

The letter ends in a very desperate and sad tone: “It is a sad time and one should be happy to be amongst those who are approached for help and not those who have to ask for help! Bear that in mind, please.”³⁹

On the 24th of July, Arnold and Gertrud Schoenberg travel with their baby to Arcachon, a seaside resort near Bordeaux, where they stayed until September. Meanwhile, Gerhard tries, with great effort and devotion, to find refuge for Georg Schoenberg and discussed it, not only with Maristany and Anglès, but also with Pau Casals and the soprano Conchita Badía. In a letter dated the 6th of August 1933, Gerhard tells Schoenberg how the singer herself offers her own house by the sea (in San Salvador) to Schoenberg's son and family. At the end, however, Georg Schoenberg did not move to Spain, but, on March 6th, 1934, he asked Gerhard to obtain him an “entry and residence permit to Barcelona”:

I currently live with my family in Paris and I would like to go to Spain for some time because, according to my father, I might be able to live there and I would wait for a further decision by my father. Would it be possible for you to get my family and me an entry and residence permit for Barcelona?⁴⁰. I would be in your debt if you could help me with this. It is a very urgent matter for me⁴¹.

There are no documents showing that Georg eventually moved to Spain with his wife and four-and-a-half-year-old daughter, and based on all indications it seems that fortunately, the move was not necessary after all. However, the exchange of letters shows not only the anguish and despair of families with some Jewish origin in Germany, who felt that their existence was in danger. It also shows the closeness and friendship that bound him to Gerhard.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 123-124.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁴⁰ Original underlining.

⁴¹ ORTIZ-DE-URBINA, P., *Arnold Schönberg and...*, p. 138.

4.6. The relevance of Gertrud Schoenberg and Poldi Gerhard

Another of the most relevant aspects of the emptying of letters between Gerhard and Schoenberg, is the observation of the close relationship between the two musicians thanks to the active mediating roles of Poldi and Gertrud, the wives of the composers. They are not only of great importance for the dialogue between Gerhard and Schoenberg, but they are also active in it.

The Viennese Gertrud Kolisch (1898-1967), Rudolf Kolisch's sister, became Schoenberg's second wife in 1924, two months before Gerhard sent his first letter to the Master. Leopoldine Feichtegger (known as *Poldi*) was also from Vienna; she was Gerhard's Spanish student during his stay in the Austrian capital (1926-1928) and became his wife in 1930. Whether Gertrud and Poldi met in Vienna between 1923 and 1925 is uncertain. However, it is clear from the letters that both wives became close friends in Barcelona between the beginning of November and the end of May 1932. As the correspondence shows, the Schoenbergs' stay in Barcelona will forever shape the relationship between the two families, even after the death of Arnold Schoenberg on the 13th of July 1951. His widow, Gertrud, and the Gerhard couple continued to write to each other until the 28th of January 1965, i.e., until two years before Gertrude's death.

Gertrud Schoenberg and Poldi Gerhard act as catalysts for the projects of both musicians, bringing optimism and looseness into the relationship and conveying important historiographical information. In Gerhard's case, the figure of Poldi is vital: the letters bear witness to her decisive role as mediator between the shy and insecure Gerhard and the Master Arnold Schoenberg, who is distanced from pupils or ex-scholars. The analysis of the exchange of letters shows to what extent the Gerhards belonged to the Schoenberg family when they were in Barcelona. They even participated in the birth of the daughter Nuria Dorothea, as Poldi Gerhard wrote to Gertrud in July 1951, after Schoenberg passed away:

[...] how happy Mr. Schoenberg was when she was born! I will never forget his facial expression when we heard her first cry through the door. And then he could no longer be held back: he had to see you and Nurilein. Everything seems to have happened just yesterday.

Dear Mr. Schoenberg, please write to us. We would be so grateful for these signs of friendship.

[Gertrud Schoenberg, handwriting]

I send you a big hug

Yours Poldi

P.S. I shall wright [sic] to Nuri soon, my affectionate love for the children!⁴²

As another letter from Roberto Gerhard to Gertrud Schoenberg from October 7th, 1951, shows, we now know exactly when the Gerhards last saw Arnold Schoenberg: in June 1933, when they visited the couple in Paris. Poldi expresses this as follows:

And now comes the painful realisation: yes, it was the last time. We have so often made plans to come to Los Angeles as long as nothing compromising suddenly came up on our horizon. It was a heartfelt desire of both of us—you know how Poldi worshipped Mr. Schoenberg. Now this desire can never be fulfilled again⁴³.

In addition, thanks to the letters, we can also trace Gertrud Schoenberg's close relationship with Roberto Gerhard from 1951, when the Spanish composer sent his own music to Schoenberg's widow, such as the *Dances of Don Quixote or Symphony No. 1* (Fig. 4).

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

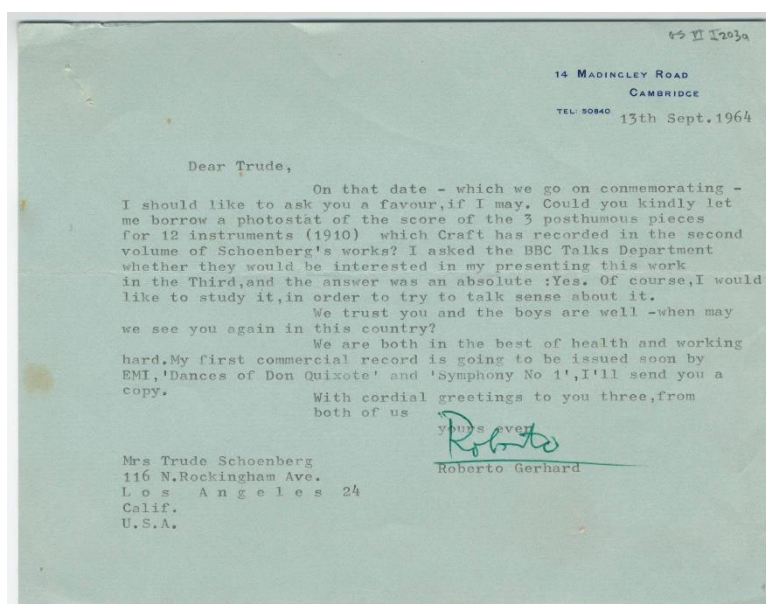


Fig. 4. Letter from Roberto Gerhard to Gertrud Schoenberg. 13 September 1964. Source: Arnold Schoenberg Center.

He also asks Gertrud Schoenberg (in the same letter) for posthumous Schoenberg notes:

Could you kindly let me borrow a Photostat of the score of the 3 posthumous pieces for 12 instruments (1910) which Craft has recorded in the second volume of Schoenberg's works? I asked the BBC Talks Department whether they would be interested in my presentencing this work in the Third, and the answer was an absolute: Yes. Of course, I would like to study it, in order to try to talk sense about it⁴⁴.

4.7. The composition process of their works

The collected documents shed light on the creative process of some of the composers' works. They provide insights into how Schoenberg worked in Barcelona on the first two acts of *Moses and Aron* in the presence of Gerhard's wife, Poldi, indicating the close relationship between the two families. On the 7 October 1951, Roberto Gerhard wrote to Gertrud Schoenberg, saddened because the master had not finished the opera before he died. Gerhard eagerly recalled that 'many parts of this work were created in Barcelona: "I can remember that, during that time, Schoenberg worked almost exclusively on it. Poldi was often with you and sat in the same room where Schoenberg worked and while he was working on it"⁴⁵.

In terms of Gerhard's approach to composing, several works are mentioned. First, the cantata *L'alta naixença del Rei en Jaume* (1931), documented in the letters between 1930 and 1932:

I have been working harder lately too. In Vienna I started an orchestral composition, which I interrupted to write a cantata, which I was encouraged to do by the UE. I found a Catalan text, which I like very much and which allows a musical interpretation that resembles, to some extent, the folk song arrangements as far as the national colour in melody and rhythm is concerned. Its theme deals with the miraculous circumstances that accompanied the birth of King Jaume I, conqueror of Mallorca and Valencia, one of the main founders of the Catalan nation, who was also glorified here as the great hero

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

and greatest ruler of the Catalan-Aragonese Empire and still lives on today in the vernacular as a legendary figure. The text is by our most gifted poet; it is partly lyrical, with partly epic characters, with some episodes reminiscent of the spirit of the *Contes drôlatiques* of Balzac⁴⁶.

The cantata was awarded 1933 the Emil Herztkä Prize. The members of the jury were, among others, Erwin Stein Egon Wellesz and Ernst Krenek (composers who appear frequently in the correspondence). But, without a doubt, one of the most interesting aspects of the correspondence concerning Gerhard's compositional process is the period of reflection and theoretical research on serialism the composer underwent from 1950 onwards, documented in a long letter he wrote to Schoenberg on December 16th, 1950⁴⁷ (Fig. 5).

This substantial letter, in many ways, anticipates Gerhard's important article 'Tonality in Twelve-Tone Music' of 1952⁴⁸. Gerhard begins by writing about some of his own piano pieces, which were to become his *Three Impromptus* and were inspired by Schoenberg's new treatment of a twelve-tone series in his Piano Concerto. He is referring to Schoenberg's *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 42*, composed in 1942, which demonstrates a freer use of octaves but, most importantly, embraces, in Gerhard's analysis, the technique of hexachordal permutation which was to be at the heart of Gerhard's own twelve-tone technique. Gerhard even claim that the same principle is to be found in Schoenberg's *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte, Op. 41* (1942) and can be traced back to his one-act opera *Von heute auf morgen, Op. 32* (1928–29) and, even before that, to the *Tanzszene* in his *Serenade, Op. 24* (1920–23). To find out whether this hypothesis is correct, he sets out for Schoenberg his interpretation of the "novel treatment" of the twelve-tone series. According to Gerhard, "the new treatment of the 12-tone series" (for example, the first row which appears in Op. 42) is not to be regarded as an absolutely final basic principle. Each series is apparently a singular phenomenon, which in turn can be traced back to a completely abstract and definitive basis:

This is because the two halves of the series, the two hexachords, are represented in such a way that their tones occupy the narrowest scale or "harmonious" space. The decisive thing, from this point of view, is the fact that no temporal order of the tones within the hexachords is fundamentally or definitively predetermined. Any other order can⁴⁹ be regarded as thematically privileged or even compositionally binding and obligatory: thus, a nexus is established between your new and your previous treatment of the series, and both are based on a common principle. From the abstract basis, however, the notes within the hexachords may appear in any order. It is more difficult to formulate to what extent a mixture of the two hexachords is possible than to perform it in practice; I can only express this in negative terms: the mixture of the hexachords can only be meaningful if they are still recognisable as such. If their ratio is no longer recognisable, then the basis is actually removed. However, the mixture can probably go very far if a special interval-structuring principle becomes thematically prominent (as in the coda of your piano concerto, for example) and so, for mainly compositional reasons, the "dichotomy" of the hexachords is eliminated in favour of the possibilities offered by "unity"⁵⁰.

Gerhard, like Schoenberg, didn't like the term *atonality*:

It seems to me that this conception now finally abolishes the idea of atonality, which has always been controversial in the theory. I mean "atonality" as the absolute negation of a centre. The prerequisite for such an idea would obviously have to be based on the assumption of an infinity of tonal relationships.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

⁴⁷ A first approach to this letter was already made in ORTIZ-DE-URBINA, P. (2014). The Correspondence between Roberto Gerhard and Arnold Schönberg. *Journal of the Society of Musicology in Ireland*, 9, pp. 41–57.

⁴⁸ GERHARD, R. (1952). Tonality in Twelve-tone Music. *The Score and I.M.A. Magazine*, 6, pp. 2–35.

⁴⁹ Original underlining.

⁵⁰ ORTIZ-DE-URBINA, P., *Arnold Schönberg and...*, pp. 178-179.

The absolute negation of a centre in a finite tonal system is obviously impossible. It is the idea of a centre that should be questioned and must be rethought, not its existence. The ratio of the two hexachords seems to me [o.l. R.G., hw.:] to correspond to the function of the three main triads in tonal music [tw.:] However, I admit that this last speculation may only be “theoretical –all too theoretical.” The following considerations seemed more interesting to me. Since each hexachord complements and conditions a second, and this one alone, each 12-tone series is already completely unambiguously determined by the first one alone⁵¹.

Besides, Gerhard offers other thoughts about, for example, the number of possible chords, going so far as to criticize the theoretical work of Alois Hába and to point out how Hindemith had made the same mistakes. Hába, in his ‘Neue Harmonielehre’⁵², comes to completely wrong conclusions: there aren’t 119 different six-note chords, as he states—and so many have thoughtlessly followed him—but no more and no less than 80:

A systematic analysis of the hexachord formations has led me to these results. In his new harmony theory’, Haba came to completely wrong conclusions—and some have recklessly repeated the same error: there are not 119 different six-sounds, as he claims but 80⁵³.

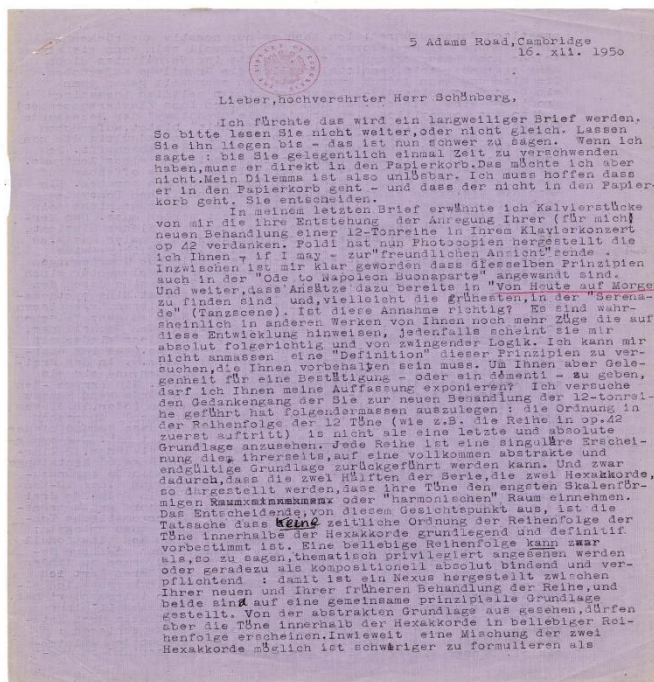


Fig. 5. First page of the long and substantial letter Roberto Gerhard wrote to Arnold Schoenberg on December 16th 1950, in which Gerhard anticipates his important article ‘Tonality in Twelve-Tone Music’ of 1952. Source: Arnold Schoenberg Center.

What always disappoints him is the same error: he forgets, for example, the identity of C–D–G and C–F–G in the trichords, counting them as two constitutionally distinct chords. An error—repeated by Hindemith—which would be the same as Rameau overlooking the identity of one chord in its inversions. In the letter, Gerhard calculates his own list of the number of chords. Gerhard also included a paragraph in which he asks Schoenberg about the permutation of a twelve-tone series by 7, something that intrigued Alban Berg. He had

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁵² HÁBA, A. (1927): *Neue Harmonielehre des diatonischen, chromatischen, Viertel-, Drittel-, Sechstel- und Zwölftel-Tonsystems*. Kistner & Siegel.

⁵³ ORTIZ-DE-ÚRBINA, P., *Arnold Schönberg and...*, p. 179.

noticed that multiple applications of this permutational technique results always in a series in which each hexachord is a hexatonic scale (pitch-class set 6–20). This very series had been used by Schoenberg in his *Ode to Napoleon*, raising questions in Gerhard’s mind as to whether Schoenberg held this series to be of particular importance:

You know that the permutation of a 12-tone row at 7 allegedly interested Alban Berg very much. I was never aware of the possible significance of such an operation. I have put them, out of curiosity, in all three categories of the basic series, with the following results: the permutation of the chromatic scale results in a circle of fifths. This, in turn, is interpreted as two hexachords and represented in such a way that all the notes within the hexachord occupy the narrowest scale, in both hexachords resulting in a major diatonic scale minus the leading note. Thus, there seems to be a direct relationship between the chromatic scale, the circle of fifths and the (6-tone) diatonic scale. Is the permutation by 7, which reveals such relationships, to be taken seriously?

The Catalan composer ends his long letter with the following very interesting reflection:

Even stranger phenomena come to light when we apply them. If one traces the result of a permuted [sic] series back to the form of its two new hexachords drafted [sic] to the narrowest space, and if one permutes them again by 7, the result is as follows: certain basic forms succeed at the same last basic form with one permutation; others with two permutations; others with three permutations; which does not permit any more, i.e. a permutation of this last basic form merely results in transpositions and no longer in constitutionally different basic forms. Consequently, it can be said that any⁵⁴ 12-tone series is in a relationship with the first, second or third member with this unique last basic form, which I am therefore calling a term series. Their figure is the following: C, C sharp, E, F, G sharp, A – D, E flat, G, B flat, B (or their transposition). Well, if I am not mistaken, your “Ode to Napoleon” is a tone series. Is it pure coincidence that you have chosen this strange tone series for this work? As always, I must express my admiration for the amazing “higher adequation” so to speak of the series for the artistic purpose of your work. I would be infinitely pleased to receive your opinion on these analyses. That is, if this boring letter does not deserve to go straight into the bin⁵⁵.

Gerhard did not receive a lengthy reply to this long letter, as Schoenberg was at that time very ill and on the verge of death. On 11 April 1951 he received the following circular, written by Schoenberg's secretary, Richard Hoffmann:

Mr. Schoenberg has been sick for several weeks and could not answer any letters; important or not. He hopes to be able to work again a little and then will gradually try to respond to demands and questions⁵⁶.

Arnold Schoenberg died on 13 July 1951 in Los Angeles, USA. Curiously, it was precisely at this time that Gerhard would turn his work around and begin to compose, in a very novel way, his five Symphonies, the creative process of which would begin shortly afterwards, in 1952, to be completed in 1967, two years before his death.

5. Conclusion

Apart from the historical data and biographical reconstructions, the correspondence reveals a close friendship between two musicians, which began as a teacher-student relationship and turned, over time, into a close friendship marked by deep respect and professional care. As Poldi Gerhard herself handwrote on the portfolio of the Roberto Gerhard unpublished works she handed over to the Cambridge University Library, Schoenberg kept Gerhard’s first letter of October 23rd, 1923, for the rest of his life:

This was Roberto’s first letter to Schoenberg. He wrote it from his retreat in Masia (sort of peasant) near Valls, hence the bond paper. Schoenberg answered with a postcard. But obviously the letter had meant

⁵⁴ Original underlining.

⁵⁵ ORTIZ-DE-URBINA, P., *Arnold Schönberg and...*, p. 128.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

something to him – he took it to Berlin –then even to the USA. At her last visit Trude [Gertrud Schoenberg] brought it and gave it to Roberto, he was very deeply touched by this gesture⁵⁷.

In addition, Gertrud tells Poldi Gerhard on the 8th of March 1955 what Schoenberg meant about the Spanish composer on the success of Gerhard's first symphony in Baden-Baden directed by Hans Rosbaud: "it is nice that the acknowledgement comes so fast and I am still alive to experience it. Especially when Arnold was always convinced of it, convinced of success, even if the musicologists do not want to hear it"⁵⁸. Shortly after Schoenberg's death, Poldi Gerhard confesses in an intimate letter of July 1951 what the Spanish composer, former student and friend of her husband thought about the Viennese master: "Believe me when I say that, if there is any student that really believed in his master, it is R[oberto]".

The correspondence between Schoenberg and Gerhard, is also a contemporary historical document on musical life in the bloody Europe of the 20th century. Both the First and the Second World War and the Spanish Civil War (in Gerhard's case) left traumatic traces on both composers, who had to fight for a new life in exile. The resulting social and cultural networks between the various European countries and the United States, which were established during the wars, are very important. Finally, the letters' exchange makes the reader an eyewitness of the last century and allows them to better understand the history of Europe.

⁵⁷ Cambridge Library. Roberto Gerhard Archive. Handwriting note from Gertrud Schönberg.

⁵⁸ ORTIZ-DE-URBINA, P., *Arnold Schönberg and...*, p. 193.