



Schönberg. Linking two continents in sounds

70 places with 70 historical acoustic objects on the occasion of Arnold Schönberg's 70th death anniversary

An online-exhibition of the Österreichische Mediathek of the Technisches Museum Wien in cooperation with the Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna

starting July 12, 2021 – www.mediathek.at/en/schoenberg

Content

About the Exhibition	2
Historical quotes	4
Places	5
Audio documents	6
On cooperation and about the project	7
Information	8

Arnold Schönberg Center, 1030 Wien, Schwarzenbergplatz 6, Zaunergasse 1-3 (entrance)

T: +43 1 712 18 88, office@schoenberg.at, www.schoenberg.at

Österreichische Mediathek, 1060 Wien, Webgasse 2a

T: +43 1 597 36 69-0, mediathek@mediathek.at, www.mediathek.at

About the Exhibition

Arnold Schönberg owned over 400 phonograph records of his own compositions, others' works and spoken-voice recordings. Professional productions and audio documentaries reflect the complex of reproduction aesthetics and recording techniques in the first half of the 20th century, as well as documenting the life and work of a composer active in several countries on two continents. For decades, the recordings – some of them unique specimens – remained in California, where Schönberg lived after emigrating in 1933 until his death in 1951. In 1998, this sonic message-in-a-bottle was transferred to Vienna and opened a short while ago by the Österreichische Mediathek.

In April 2019, the Österreichische Mediathek took over Schönberg's record collection from the Arnold Schönberg Center's archive for digitization and long-term preservation. It contains shellac recordings and self-made discs owned by the composer, recordings and test pressings of his works, as well as some private recordings. The Österreichische Mediathek has digitized the audio recordings and digitally restored them for use in an online exhibition.

Examples from Schönberg's record collection audibly trace the places where he worked, lived and taught, detailing various stages of his life. The collection's digitizing, reprocessing and conservation work is presented audio-visually.

**Digitizing and
and long-term
archiving – the
Österr. Mediathek**

Sound recordings are fragile contemporary testimonies whose survival is severely jeopardized; the phonograph records themselves are subject to deterioration and phonographs, often with an expiry date, are no longer available in sufficient quantity. Yet, without being able to play them, these testimonies are practically worthless – mere museum artifacts, their content no longer discernible.

Schönberg's record collection is also interesting because of its insights into the person of its owner; what did he collect? – what did he play? – what was recorded? – what can the collection tell us about Schönberg as an individual and his professional activities as a composer, musician and teacher?

To answer these questions and others, now and in the future, the simplest possible access to the sound recordings and their permanent conservation are essential.

Digitizing

The first step at the Österreichische Mediathek was to digitize the sound recordings, the point of which was to create digital copies resembling the originals to the extent technically possible. That means that there was the least possible interference during the digitizing process, creating a faithful sampling – a “new original.” All improvements necessary in terms of audio engineering are always undertaken using a digital copy exclusively, and the entire digitizing process is precisely documented.

Signal enhancement

Apart from the speech or music recording, more or less desirable secondary noises are audible when playing audio documents. Signal enhancement carefully eliminates noise interference to bring out the actual recorded content. This intervention is always a balancing act, requiring experience in handling the material, to avoid the undesirable result of a digital artefact reducing listening pleasure.

Long-term archiving	The unprocessed original transfers and their reworkings alike are long-term stored and preserved at the Österreichische Mediathek, along with the documentation of the digitizing procedure. This ensures that the digitization process remains transparent in the future and that other, newer processing methods can be developed. In addition, multiple back-ups of all stored data are made and regularly migrated. In the case of the Schönberg collection, the analog phono discs have been returned to the Arnold Schönberg Center.
Schönberg and the phonograph record	Schönberg was critical of phonograph records; he had already gained much knowledge of the repertoire by studying scores and playing music with friends by the time the medium began its triumphal march in the 1890s. Records were an exorbitant luxury and, due to their considerable technical shortcomings, unappealing to the accomplished musician. Schönberg's daughter Nuria recalls that also later in the United States the composer rarely used the gramophone, "Mostly, we used the radio, when classical music was aired every evening from 8 to 10 p.m. One of my happiest memories is listening to the radio and looking over my father's shoulder as he followed the music with the score."
Contexts	Early records in Schönberg's collection are test pressings, often made in the course of radio broadcasts; they contain only excerpts of the compositions played. In the USA, his works were occasionally broadcast by recording them live with microphones placed on the radio apparatus. Although the recording quality is seldom up to technical standards, they are important sources in terms of reproduction technology – especially if they were made by performers in direct contact with the composer. Examples include the famous recording of Schönberg's complete string quartets by the Kolisch Quartet, an early radio recording of excerpts from the op. 9 <i>Chamber Symphony</i> and the <i>Serenade</i> op. 24, conducted by Fritz Stiedry. These productions provide an idea of the Vienna School's performance theory, according to which a flexible procedure serves to clarify compositional structures, thus aiding comprehension of a work.
Transatlantic biography	Beyond musical significance, the legacy is testimony to a transatlantic biography. The earliest audio documents date back to Schönberg's time in Berlin and his increasing involvement with radio; he was quick to recognize its potential for propagating contemporary music. Despite all criticism, he was open to technical innovations, using the medium of audio recording in many ways. During his American exile, he made voice recordings together with his wife Gertrud and daughter Nuria, self-pressed discs to send as messages of greeting to Henriette Kolisch, his mother-in-law still living in Vienna at the time. In his last years, he used wire reels to dictate letters and works on music theory for transcription by his assistants. After the war, phonograph records became an important means of communication in contact with the Old World; Schönberg received many audio recordings from Europe documenting its reviving concert life, giving him hope that his work would live on, irrespective of his direct influence.

Historical Quotes

*For somebody who moved home so frequently, this may be his homeland.
He brought all this with him.*

Nuria Schoenberg Nono. Documentary feature:
“Arnold Schönberg – Ein Wiener kehrt heim”. Vienna 1998

Quite certainly the radio is a foe! – and so are the gramophone and soundfilm. An inexorable foe, irresistibly on the advance; opposition is a hopeless prospect. Here are the most damaging things it does: [...] It accustoms the ear to an unspeakable coarse tone, and to a body of sound constituted in a soupy, blurred way, which precludes all finer differentiation.

Arnold Schönberg: Reply to a Questionnaire, 1930

Is there nobody in [the recording] industry who knows that it might be of some value for this industry to have at least some of my works in an authentic recording. Is there nobody who foresees that our successors will ask how it was possible at a time where the technique was advanced enough to preserve the original doings of the most unimportant people for eternity, but was there nobody who knew that there is a man who will be of some interest in the future, but this man remained in the dark [...]?

Arnold Schönberg to Columbia Phonograph Company, December 19, 1936

For the true product of the mind, the musical idea, the unalterable, is established in the relationship between pitches and time-divisions. But all the other things – dynamics, tempo, timbre and the character, clarity, effect, etc., which they produce – are really no more than the performer’s resources, serving to make the idea comprehensible and admitting of variations.

Arnold Schönberg: Mechanical Musical Instruments, 1924

Places (places of composition and performance venues, residence addresses of composers and performers, recording locations, points of reference)

Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Hill Auditorium • **Arcachon:** Schönberg's vacation spot • **Berlin:** Berliner Philharmoniker; Fritz Stiedry's residence; Villa Lepcke, Arnold Schönberg's residence; Schumann-Saal; Arnold Schönberg's residence, c/o Zehme; Recording studio at Ultraphon AG • **Black Mountain:** Black Mountain College in North Carolina • **Boston:** Boston Symphony Hall • **Cambridge:** Harvard University; Elizabeth Coolidge's residence • **Carlshagen, Usedom:** Schönberg's vacation spot • **Ellis Island:** Former headquarters of the immigration office • **Frankfurt am Main:** Concert Hall Frankfurt; Alte Oper Frankfurt (Von heute auf morgen op. 32, premiere) • **Gmunden:** Hois'n Tavern • **Graz:** Musikverein Graz • **Hawaii:** Pearl Harbour • **Kvistgård:** Castle ruins Gurre • **Los Angeles:** Wilshire Ebell Theatre; Igor Strawinsky's residence; University of California at Los Angeles; Adolph Weiss' residence; Columbia Recording Studio; Arnold Schönberg's residence; KFWB Radio Station; Corinne Cochem's residence; Philharmonic Auditorium; Otto Klemperer's residence; Ambassador Hotel; Assistance League Playhouse; Campbell's Bookstore; RCA Victor Recording Studios; House of Dr. Waitzfelder (Schönberg's physician) • **London:** Tibor Varga's residence • **Long Beach:** Gerald Strang's residence • **Mödling:** Arnold Schönberg's residence • **Molveno:** Summer residence Kolisch Quartet • **München:** Hotel Kempinsky Vier Jahreszeiten • **New York:** Eduard Steuermann's residence; New School for Social Research; Carnegie Hall, Rockefeller Center; Town Hall; Juilliard School of Music; Fritz Stiedry's residence; Business address Artur Rodzinski • **Paris:** Max Deutsch's residence • **Payerbach:** Place of composition • **Philadelphia:** Metropolitan Opera House • **Prag:** Czech Radio • **Roquebrune-Cap-Martin:** Schönberg's vacation spot • **Rottach-Egern am Tegernsee:** Place of composition • **Salt Lake City:** Mormon Tabernacle Church • **St. Louis:** Jefferson Hotel • **Steinakirchen am Forst:** Place of composition • **Traunkirchen:** Villa Spaun • **Venedig:** Piazza San Marco, Arnold Schönberg, Gertrud Schönberg, 1924, Honeymoon • **Warschau:** Monument to the Warsaw Uprising • **West Hollywood:** United Artists Studio • **Westminster:** Western Maryland College, Business address of Dika Newlin • **Wien:** Alexander Zemlinsky's residence; Alban Berg's residence; Kaufmännischer Verein Wien, Festsaal; Central Cemetery, Honorary grave of Johannes Brahms; Vienna-Grinzing Cemetery, Gustav Mahler's grave; Arnold Schönberg's residence (Liechtensteinstraße 68/70)

Audio documents

Arnold Schönberg: Zwei Gesänge op. 1; Verklärte Nacht op. 4; Pelleas und Melisande op. 5; Streichquartett Nr. 1 op. 7; Kammer-symphonie op. 9; Streich-quartett Nr. 2 op. 10; Friede auf Erden op. 13; Das Buch der hängenden Gärten op. 15; Fünf Orchesterstücke op. 16; Sechs kleine Klavierstücke op. 19; Pierrot lunaire op. 21; Vier Lieder für Gesang und Orchester op. 22; Serenade op. 24; Suite op. 29; Bläserquintett op. 26; Streichquartett Nr. 3 op. 30; Variationen für Orchester op. 31; Von heute auf morgen op. 32; Klavierstück op. 33a; Concerto for Violin and Orchestra op. 36; Streichquartett Nr. 4 op. 37; Kammer-symphonie Nr. 2 op. 38; Kol Nidre op. 39; Variations on a recitative for organ op. 40; Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte op. 41; Concerto for piano op. 42; Theme and Variations op. 43b; Prelude op. 44; String Trio op. 45; A Survivor from Warsaw op. 46; Phantasy for Violin with Piano Accompaniment op. 47; Drei Volkslieder op. 49; Gurre-Lieder

Konzert für Streichquartett und Orchester (B-Dur) nach **Georg Friedrich Händel:** Concerto grosso op. 6 Nr. 7 • **Johannes Brahms:** Klavierquartett op. 25 (Bearb.: A. Schönberg) • **Johann Sebastian Bach:** Komm, Gott, Schöpfer, Heiliger Geist BWV 667 (Bearb.: A. Schönberg) • **Ludwig van Beethoven:** Symphonie Nr. 5 op. 67 • **Alban Berg:** Lyrische Suite für Streichquartett • **Claude Debussy:** Trois Nocturnes. 1. Nuages • **Hanns Eisler:** Vierzehn Arten den Regen zu beschreiben • **Igor Strawinsky:** Babel. Genesis-Suite. Teil 7 • **Gerald Strang:** Sonatina for Clarinet • **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart:** Streichquartett KV 589 • **Dika Newlin:** Sinfonia for piano • Jewish Holiday Dances. Succot – Yom Tov Lanu (arr. Ernst Toch) / Simchat Tora – Sisu (arr. Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco) • To the birthday of broadcasts of contemporary music (Radioansprache)

**On cooperation and
about the project**

Schönberg's estate, which has been housed in the Arnold Schönberg Center in Vienna since 1998 after a transatlantic voyage and which was added to UNESCO's world heritage program in 2011, contains an extensive collection of historic audio documents. They have been digitized as part of a cooperation with the Österreichische Mediathek and are now accessible to a wider public.

Angelika Möser

Arnold Schönberg Center, Director

We are very pleased with the successful cooperation with the Arnold Schönberg Center in preserving the composer's record collection.

His audible legacy provides new insights into his work; it is of international importance, and not only in musicological terms. At the Österreichische Mediathek, the Austrian audiovisual archive, the fundamental work ensures that future audiences will be able to hear the acoustic treasures left by historically important personalities.

Peter Aufreiter

Technisches Museum Wien with Österreichischer Mediathek, Director General

What recordings did Schönberg collect and listen to? How do his works sound in his interpretations, and how does his voice sound?

A joint project of the Arnold Schönberg Center and the Österreichische Mediathek resulted in digitally securing his record collection, and the recordings are now permanently accessible online. Follow in Schönberg's wake on a virtual journey to the places where he lived and worked, musically accompanied by sound carriers from his estate.

Gabriele Fröschl

Österreichischen Mediathek, Director

Schönberg was not a record collector. There are few commercial products in his estate – but there are test pressings, radio and private recordings, not all of them up to the technical standards of the time, but which preserve a performance practice which would otherwise have been irretrievably lost; the manner of playing evinces a freedom and expressive power which might surprise many, particularly as regards works of the Vienna School.

Eike Fess

Arnold Schönberg Center, Curator

The collection is heterogenous in its materiality and content; it contains several intriguing unique specimens, including records made of metal, cardboard and shellac, kept in a sleeve Schönberg made himself and labeled "Ronny." They are extraordinary audio documents, mementos for his son, born in 1937. There are also quartet recordings by Rudolf Kolisch, the child's godfather. A very touching audio document preserves the voices of the parental Schönbergs and their three-year-old daughter Nuria, birthday messages of greeting from exile to faraway Vienna, spoken for grandmother Henriette Kolisch in Los Angeles in January 1935.

Therese Muxeneder

Arnold Schönberg Center, Curator

Schönberg. Linking two continents in sounds
70 places with 70 historical acoustic objects
on the occasion of Arnold Schönberg's 70th death anniversary

An online-exhibition of the Österreichische Mediathek of the Technisches Museum Wien
in cooperation with the Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna
starting July 12, 2021
www.mediathek.at/en/schoenberg

Arnold Schönberg Center

Curators

Eike Feß, Therese Muxeneder

Exhibition film

Christoph Edtmayr

Österreichische Mediathek

Concept, Curation, Web implementation

Gabriele Fröschl, Christina Linsboth

Digitization, Sound restoration

Stefan Kaltseis, Rudolf Pohl, Dominic Zimmer

Cataloging collection

Melanie Gaderer, Anton Hubauer

Photo editing, localization

Rainer Hubert

Arnold Schönberg Center – Press

Edith Barta, T: + 43 1 712 18 88-11, barta@schoenberg.at

Monika Eigner, T: + 43 1 712 18 88-13, presse@schoenberg.at

Österreichische Mediathek/Technisches Museum Wien – Press

Johannes Kapeller, T: + 43 1 597 36 69-7138, johannes.kapeller@mediathek.at

Madeleine Pillwatsch, T: + 43 1 89998-1200, presse@tmw.at

Press materials: press images and audio excerpts

Download: www.mediathek.at/service/presse/pressematerialien-schoenberg/



From the Schönberg Collection (audio excerpts):

Pierrot lunaire op. 21 Nr. 21 O alter Duft

Gurre-Lieder. Vorspiel

To the birthday of broadcasts of contemporary music

