

Correspondence between Arnold Schönberg and Alban Berg



Arnold Schönberg (right) asked Alban Berg (left) to join a project aiming to allow the composers more scope for development in the case of new management at UE. Berg declined, however.

Schönberg to Berg

Berlin-Charlottenburg, 4.4.1928

Arnold Schönberg

Charlottenburg 9

Nussbaum-Allee 17

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Dear Friend, If you approve, you should participate in the attached project. But you should not feel compelled. Simply sign as a proponent and send it back to me without delay.

Perhaps you can also ask Frau Mahler and Bittner if they would like to participate. I would ask you to approach Webern, of course (I have no more copies). Schreker is also taking part.

How are you? You and Helene.

With warmest wishes and Happy Easter

Your Arnold Schönberg



Arnold Schönberg (1874–1951)

Berg to Schönberg

Vienna, 10.4.1928

Berg, Vienna XIII./1

Taken from: "The Berg-Schoenberg Correspondence: Selected Letters", ed. by Juliane Brand, Christopher Hailey, and Donald Harris. New York: Norton, 1987. Used by permission of Belmont Music

A thousand thanks, my dearest friend, for your kind intention to allow me to participate in your project as a proponent. But I must take advantage of your permission "not to feel compelled" and tell you that I don't dare join in. At the moment I cannot take the risk that Hertzka – in reaction to this project – might take a businessman's attitude and suspend or reduce my monthly 600 schillings, an annuity representing my sole income (the few student fees don't

count), for which the current returns from my works are no equivalent. (Already I owe – even if only on paper and not morally – about 6,000 schillings on this annuity, which has only been running for 2¼ years). It is quite a different matter for you, of course: the whole world, and that includes Hertzka, knows that all of UE's expenses on your behalf will be returned a hundredfold, if not next year, then at any rate in the foreseeable future. Schreker, too, can afford to dictate – though for a different reason, namely: on the basis of his 1,000 stage performances. But I, with my two dozen *Wozzeck* performances and the prospect (not even assured) of another acceptance in – – Oldenburg, depend on Hertzka's personal goodwill if I am not to endanger the continuation of my full annuity for the next few years (until I finish another opera). For my contract, which runs until 1932, doesn't offer the slightest security in this regard.

I don't need to tell you how difficult this refusal is for me, and how well I know that if you are indeed angry with me in consequence, my pleading with you not to be won't have any effect. I venture this plea nonetheless□

I spoke with Bittner at length about the matter. He considers founding such an organisation – particularly with regard to a change of UE management – very necessary, but believes it would still be possible when the time came and that it would be easy to organise such a group overnight. For now, however, feeling personally very close to Hertzka as he does, he himself prefers to refrain from such a step, since it would doubtless hurt Hertzka's feelings. Alma Mahler is not in Vienna. I shall send a copy of the two printed items to her in Venice right away and assume that either you or I will hear by return post – one might expect: a positive response.

“Among another” I shall likewise inform Webern.

Your kind enquiry as to our well-being sounds as if you hadn't heard from me in a long time. Didn't you get the letter I wrote about 8–10 days ago? I gave full details about Paris (where it was wonderful) and Zurich (where it was awful) and about the jury meeting there of the I.G.f.l.M.i.A, the results of which satisfied me in only one respect, that (in addition to Webern's trio) I was also able to prevail with Zemlinsky's IIIrd String Quartet for Austria. I hope that letter did not go astray too!

In the meantime there has been nothing new, save for continuing negotiations with S. Fischer-Berlin for Pippa. Hauptmann continues to insist on his 50% share of the royalties, another 20% of the libretto and 5% of the music. Agreeing to these extraordinarily oppressive conditions is very hard for me (and for Hertzka). So I spent this Easter less “happy” than helpless. I

hope that you and your dear wife and also her dear mother, all of whom we greet warmly, enjoyed the holidays! And I hope – I ask you once again – that you're not angry with

Your Alban Berg