

## Schoenberg's Atonal Music

Award-winning author Jack Boss returns with the “prequel” to *Schoenberg's Twelve-Tone Music* (Cambridge, 2014) demonstrating that the term “atonal” is meaningful in describing Schoenberg's music from 1908 to 1921. This book shows how Schoenberg's atonal music can be understood in terms of successions of pitch and rhythmic motives and pitch-class sets that flesh out the large frameworks of “musical idea” and “basic image.” It also explains how tonality, after losing its structural role in Schoenberg's music after 1908, begins to reappear not long after as an occasional expressive device. Like its predecessor, *Schoenberg's Atonal Music* contains close readings of representative works, including the Op. 11 and Op. 19 Piano Pieces, the Op. 15 *George-Lieder*, the monodrama *Erwartung*, and *Pierrot lunaire*. These analyses are illustrated by richly detailed music examples, revealing the underlying logic of some of Schoenberg's most difficult pieces of music.

JACK BOSS is Professor of Music Theory and Composition at the University of Oregon. His previous book, *Schoenberg's Twelve-Tone Music: Symmetry and the Musical Idea* (Cambridge, 2014) received the Wallace Berry Award from the Society for Music Theory in 2015. His articles can be found in the *Journal of Music Theory*, *Music Theory Spectrum*, *Perspectives of New Music*, *Music Theory Online*, *Music Analysis*, *Intégral*, and *Gamut*.

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Schoenberg's Atonal Music: Musical Idea, Basic Image, and Specters of Tonal Function

# Schoenberg's Atonal Music

## Musical Idea, Basic Image, and Specters of Tonal Function

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*For SunHwa*

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It seems that with children of the mind, just like with physical children, the second child is easier to deliver than the first. Though this book only needed four years to come into being, a much shorter gestation period than its older sibling's (*Schoenberg's Twelve-Tone Music*) thirteen years, there was still a large number of people who assisted and encouraged me as it took shape, and others who served as inspirations for me.

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Stephen Medlar, and Joy Schroeder. Joy Schroeder also helped me construct the book's index.

The reader will not go very far through this book before encountering the names of two Yale professors who not only served as the dual inspirations for it, but also are primarily responsible for giving me the training and analytic “equipment” I needed to complete this task. When I entered Yale in 1984, my main objective was to study with Allen Forte and David Lewin. I only had a year of coursework with Prof. Lewin, as he moved on to found the music theory graduate program at Harvard in fall 1985, but my connection and friendship with Prof. Forte continued on through my doctoral dissertation and far beyond that. It would not be too fanciful, I think, to understand the analyses I have presented here as the discussions I would have had with David Lewin and Allen Forte about these pieces 34 years ago, if I had known a little more and been a bit more confident back then (indeed, many of the analyses seem to carry on a running dialogue with published works of Lewin).

Just as she did for *Schoenberg's Twelve-Tone Music*, my daughter, Christine Boss, provided me with a painting for the cover that perfectly captures the spirit of the book. Last but certainly not least, my wife, SunHwa Lee Boss, was my greatest source of encouragement during the past four years, a willing listener to my detailed accounts of the joys and struggles of creating this book and designing its examples. She also provided motivation for me by promising to take me out for Orange Mocha Mousse Cake every time I finished a chapter. As she always does, she made the journey that was writing this book much sweeter.

Jack Boss  
Eugene, Oregon

## Abbreviations and Notational Conventions

CHROM	the chromatic collection
DIA, G major or DIA (G)	the G major diatonic collection (not necessarily established through traditional chord progressions)
HEX <sub>a,b</sub>	a transposition of the hexatonic collection; the numbers in subscript indicate the two starting pitch classes of the particular transposition (in normal form)
I <sub>x</sub> , T <sub>x</sub> I, or I, t = x	inversion of a pitch class or set of pcs around pitch-class 0 (accomplished by subtracting the original pitch class(es) from 12), followed by transposition “up” x number of half-steps in pitch-class space
ic	interval class
LH	left hand (of the piano)
OCT <sub>a,b</sub>	a transposition of the octatonic collection; the numbers in subscript indicate the two starting pitch classes of the particular transposition (in normal form)
P	passing tone
P <sub>x</sub> , I <sub>x</sub> , R <sub>x</sub> , RI <sub>x</sub>	prime, inversion, retrograde, retrograde inversion. These four symbols identify some succession of twelve or fewer notes as one of the four “canonical” transformations of a source row. The number in the subscript signifies the first pitch class of a prime or inversion, and the last pitch class of a retrograde or retrograde inversion
N	neighboring tone
n-1 invariance	where two pitch-class sets hold all but one pitch class in common, for example {0, 1, 3} and {0, 1, 4}
pc/PC	pitch class
pcs/PCs	pitch classes
RH	right hand (of the piano)
SC	set class
Strong Rp {3, 6, 7}	two four-note pc sets have the three pcs 3, 6, and 7 in common

## List of Abbreviations and Notational Conventions

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$T_x$ or $t = x$	transposition “up” $x$ number of half-steps in pitch-class space (can be understood most easily as rotating a group of pitch classes $x$ spaces clockwise on the “pitch-class clock,” an arrangement of the twelve pitch classes in a circle with 0 at the top)
Weak Rp 3-5 (016)	two four-note pc sets do not literally have three pcs in common, but could share three pcs if one set were transposed and/or inverted. The three common pcs would belong to SC 3-5
$WT_x$	a transposition of the whole-tone collection; the number in subscript indicates the starting pitch class of the particular transposition (in normal form)

Pitches are indicated using the registral designations recommended by the Acoustical Society of America, in which middle C is designated as C4, the octave above as C5, etc.

Successions of pitch classes or intervals are enclosed in angle brackets, unordered sets in curly brackets.

A vertical dyad of pitch classes is indicated as “11-above-0.”

Horizontal successions of ordered pitch intervals are indicated as follows:  $\langle +1, -3 \rangle$  (plus signs represent ascent in half-steps, minus signs descent in half-steps); vertical stacks of unordered pitch intervals (usually counted up from the bottom of a chord) are indicated as follows:  $\langle 5, 6 \rangle$ .

Ordered pitch-class intervals between the adjacent pitch classes of a prime or normal form are indicated by bold numbers below and between the pitch-class numbers of the prime or normal form:

(014)  
**1 3**

Set classes are indicated using both their Forte name and prime form, for example 3-3 (014).

Interval vectors are enclosed in square brackets.

Pitch-class numbers are not given in bold, order numbers are given in bold.

Vertical pitch symmetry is represented by the name of the pitch axis in bold, with vertical arrows extending up and down from that axis.

Pitch-class symmetry is represented by the name of the pitch-class axis in bold (no registral designation), with vertical arrows extending up and down.

**Instruments**

Woodwinds (WW): fl. (flute), picc. (piccolo), ob. (oboe), E.H. (English horn), cl. (clarinet), bass cl. or b. cl. (bass clarinet), E $\flat$  cl. (E $\flat$  clarinet), D cl. (D clarinet), bsn. (bassoon), cbsn. (contrabassoon).

Brass: hn. (horn), tpt. (trumpet), tb. (trombone), ta. (tuba).

Strings: vn. (violin), 1st vn. (first violin), 2nd vn. (second violin), va. (viola), vcl. or 'cello (violoncello), cb. (contrabass).

Percussion: timp. (timpani), cel. (celesta), glock. (glockenspiel), xyl. (xylophone)

Hp. (harp).