

SCHOENBERG: 'NIGHT MUSIC', *VERKLÄRTE NACHT*
AND *ERWARTUNG*

Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951) is often portrayed as a composer who began as a heart-on-sleeve late Romantic only to evolve during the First World War into an austere, mathematically obsessed deviser of musical puzzles. Yet to claim that in his music he replaced tonality with its absolute opposite, atonality, as the twelve-tone method swept away all trace of traditional harmonic and thematic processes, is as misleading as to argue that romantic warmth and humanity morphed into the purest and most austere modernistic spirituality. This handbook refocuses the wealth of recent research into two of Schoenberg's major compositions; the expressive character of those relatively early works, which centre on nocturnal images of darkness and despair, is at its most original and powerful in *Verklärte Nacht* and *Erwartung*, where the dramatic interplay between stabilising continuities and disorientating fragmentations reveals the elements of a modernist aesthetics that remained fundamental to Schoenberg's musical thought.

ARNOLD WHITTALL is Professor Emeritus of Musical Theory and Analysis at King's College London. His most recent books are *The Wagner Style* (2015) and *British Music after Britten* (2020), and he is co-translator of Pierre Boulez's *Music Lessons: The Collège de France Lectures* (2018).

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