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Comparing *Erwartung* and *Die Glückliche Hand* through the Female Gaze

by

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During the early 20th century, the rise of psychoanalysis impacted society by offering a revolutionary approach to the mind. This rise occurred due to the work of the work of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), who believed many mental disorders were rooted in the subconscious. Psychoanalysis revolutionized how we approach the brain and offered a new perspective on patient treatment. Artists in the early 20th century also explored and insisted on new ways to view society through art. Schoenberg and Freud were both pioneers in their field of work, and Freud even inspired Schoenberg's early atonal music.¹ Freud may have instilled his thoughts on female hysteria in Schoenberg's writing, influencing him to write *Erwartung* and *Die Glückliche Hand* through a psychoanalytical lens. Freud did not invent the concept of hysteria. Hippocrates created the term "hysteria" during the 5th century BCE, which many psychologists popularized in the 18th and 19th centuries. This concept—that women are predisposed to irrational behavior—occurred throughout society until its removal from the DSM (The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) in 1980. It also bled its way into the opera scene, with many well-known women characters displayed as nonsensical or victimized. Schoenberg was no exception to this treatment of women. During his atonal period of music, he composed two monodramas—*Erwartung* and *Die Glückliche Hand*. The women in *Erwartung* and *Die Glückliche Hand* display many stereotypes that Freud coins and explains in his case studies. In this paper, I want to uncover what theatrical and compositional elements from Schoenberg's works *Erwartung* and *Die Glückliche Hand* imply the irrationality and victimization of women.

¹ Alexander Carpenter, "Schoenberg's Vienna, Freud's Vienna: Re-Examining the Connections between the Monodrama *Erwartung* and the Early History of Psychoanalysis," *The Musical Quarterly* 93, no. 1 (2010): 144.

Schoenberg approached the writing of *Erwartung* and *Die Glückliche Hand* rather differently. Marie Pappenheim—an Austrian socialist, librettist, and doctor—wrote *Erwartung*'s libretto, but scholars still debate over the ownership of the plot. *Erwartung* was written in only two weeks and premiered 15 years later. For *Die Glückliche Hand*, however, Schoenberg decided to write both the music and the libretto and spent three years writing and developing a scenscape for the story. *Erwartung* and *Die Glückliche Hand*, although different in plot structure, leave the audience feeling empathy for Der Mann and believing the woman is hysterical. Although they share that commonality, the main difference is that *Erwartung* is about a woman, and *Die Glückliche Hand* is about a man, which Schoenberg spent significantly more time with than *Erwartung*. This disparity could have been for many reasons, but the main question is what specific elements Schoenberg uses to portray women irrationally. From my research, I have found little to no discussion about the blatant sexism toward women, and it is concerning to know that Freud had an immense influence on Schoenberg during his earlier atonal writings.² The cause of concern stems from Freud's internal struggle with his portrayal of women in his writings, which seems to be mirrored in *Erwartung* and *Die Glückliche Hand*. Even though the literature establishes that female characters are usually inferior to men in earlier operas,³ I want to discover how these two works contribute to the vision of women through a psychoanalytical and contemporary lens. There has undoubtedly been growth from women's initial to current portrayal in opera. Many, if not all, current opera composers strive for accurate representation of not just women but all identities in this art form. Even though this is how modern opera operates today, it is necessary to identify the evolution of how composers and librettists write about women.

² Carpenter, "Schoenberg's Vienna, Freud's Vienna," 145 .

³ Ralph P. Locke, "What are these Women Doing in Opera?" in *En Travesti: Women, Gender Subversion, Opera*, edited by Corinne E. Blackmer and Patricia Juliana Smith (Columbia University Press, 1995), 60.

There is a need to analyze how Schoenberg portrayed women in his operas because he is the first composer to explain his character choices psychologically and is a crucial stepping stone in this process. A psychological explanation of the characters in *Die Glückliche Hand* and *Erwartung* could tell us why some operatic composers chose to portray women as inferior to men. Schoenberg is, of course, not representative of all opera composers; but he is the first to approach opera with the influence of psychoanalysis, which makes his explanation perhaps more insightful than others. This psychological intervention is, again, an important event in opera's societal progression, and the impact of women's character writing in opera has had performers of women characters upset and discouraged since the conception of opera. Analyzing *Die Glückliche Hand* and *Erwartung* through a critical lens, knowing that they were created based on psychology, could make us understand why women are viewed this way, especially in opera's earlier writings.

The portrayal of *Die Frau (Erwartung)* and *The Woman or ein Weib (Die Glückliche Hand)* through costuming and lighting was especially troubling through a critical lens. Having spent three years developing *Die Glückliche Hand*, Schoenberg put much thought into the lighting and visual effects. For example, Hoover outlines the Woman's entrance as representing Der Mann's soul in *Die Glückliche Hand*.⁴ Violet hues, Hoover explains, signify the deepest part of the soul through its intense concentric motion. The Woman's entrance features her in violet garments and bathed in violet lighting, which Schoenberg specifically writes in the stage directions. Since the story of *Die Glückliche Hand* is about Der Mann and not The Woman, she is merely an objective source for the inner workings of Der Mann and holds no significance of

⁴ Elizabeth Hoover, "Sound, Light and Motion: The Abstraction and Representation of Inner Occurrences in Schoenberg's *Die glückliche Hand*," M.A. thesis, Miami University, 2008.

her own. Her only significance is her subservient duty to Der Mann. Once The Woman gifts Der Mann the violet chalice at her entrance, she becomes cold and bitter and immediately retreats to the next man she sees. In *Erwartung*, Die Frau enters in long, flowing white robes in the premiere in 1924. As the Monodrama progresses, however, her garments deteriorate as she realizes she is no longer tethered to a man. Both women in these shows become “hysterical” when the presence of a man is not in their future.

Another issue I want to discuss is how *Die Glückliche Hand* and *Erwartung* view men as “structured” and women as “unstructured” through the music. Schoenberg wanted to express the freeness of the unconscious through the lack of structure in the music, much like how Freud wanted the freeness of the unconscious to come through his treatment of patients. This lack of structure could imply Die Frau’s irrationality compared to Der Mann’s secureness in *Die Glückliche Hand*. Der Mann in *Die Glückliche Hand* is the only character that provides insight into the soul, while the other characters are mere gendered caricatures. Although Der Mann faces immense conflict throughout the plot, the audience still associates Der Mann with reason because of the systematic structure of the music. In *Erwartung*, however, the audience feels uneasy since the absence of structure is apparent.

The last issue I faced was Schoenberg’s negligence in his new approach to opera. After analyzing his musical and plot choices, I noticed opposing objectives. It seems Schoenberg prioritized the musical advancements, the entanglement of music, and psychoanalysis in *Erwartung* and *Die Glückliche Hand*. What he doesn’t prioritize, however, is the tired trope of the “crazy woman” in the opera. Even though Schoenberg paved the way for atonality in vocal

work, his negligence lies in his failure to create a “rational” woman in *Erwartung*, *Die Glückliche Hand*, and his other works. He pioneered these musical and plot devices, so why doesn't he hold his portrayal of women to the same standard? There is little to no literature about the connection between his technical musical advancements and his stagnant approach to women characters in opera. I hope to gain more insight into his choices through this project.

Literature Review

This literature review about the comparison of *Erwartung* and *Die Glückliche Hand* can be divided into three sections: Schoenberg's scenic visions; the structuredness of his composition; and Freudian influence.

Scenic Vision

Beck outlines Schoenberg's influences while creating *Die Glückliche Hand*. For example, German poet and writer Richard Dehmel (1863-1920) was an immense influence on Schoenberg as early as the creation of *Verklärte Nacht*, in which Schoenberg set the music to Dehmel's text.⁵ Dehmel stressed the importance of self-reliance and how redemption will proceed in emotional turmoil, which was a key talking point in one of Schoenberg's letters to Dehmel during the creation of *Die Jakobsleiter*.

...how the man of today, who has passed through materialism, socialism, and anarchy, who was an atheist, but still preserved a remnant of ancient beliefs...how

⁵ Tom Beck, "The Literary Sources of 'Die Glückliche Hand,'" *Tempo*, no. 189 (June 1994): 18.

this modern man struggles with God arrives at the point of finding God and becoming religious.⁶

Playwright August Strindberg (1849-1912) and painter Oskar Kokoshcka (1886-1980) share similar beliefs to Dehmel but offer more nuanced character insights. Like Dehmel, Strindberg rejected the ideas of materialism and skepticism, manifesting in his work *Dream Play*, featuring characters such as “The Officer” and “The Attorney.” Strindberg describes one of the female characters as “What she is to us and to others means nothing...Only what she is to HIM is what she REALLY is.”⁷ Kokoshka offers a similar character structure to Strindberg in that he does not name his characters but rather their functions. *The Burning Thornbush*—an important piece of literature during the expressionist movement—in particular, contains uncanny similarities to *Die Glückliche Hand*, which depicts an animal devouring a man’s heart, awakening a woman from the animal’s skin. These erotic allusions in Kokoshka’s writing are present in Schoenberg’s compositions, especially in the opening of *Die Glückliche Hand*, where a cat-like creature rests on Der Mann’s back. The most profound influence, however, could have been Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944). Schoenberg and Kandinsky had a close academic relationship. They inspired each other through their art since they both had a common goal—to redefine reality. The most obvious influence of Kandinsky’s work was his treatise *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1910), in which he expresses his distaste for materialism and the psychology of color. The use of color is critical in *Die Glückliche Hand* since the meaning Kandinsky assigns to each color deepens Der Mann’s perception of the world and propels the story forward. Beck argues that the

⁶ Beck, “The Literary Sources of ‘Die Glückliche Hand,’” 18; Beck here refers to Schoenberg’s letter to Dehmel.

⁷ Beck, “The Literary Sources of ‘Die Glückliche Hand,’” 20; Beck here refers to Strindberg’s *Dream Play*.

non-musical aspects of *Die Glückliche Hand* are necessary to understand to appreciate Schoenberg's work between the union of art and media.

In his article "The Dramatic Structure of Schönberg's 'Erwartung,'" Dace explains the dramatic perspective of Schoenberg's *Erwartung*.⁸ He argues that Schoenberg was drawn to the expressionist movement since he strived to express humans' inner thoughts through music. Schoenberg's objective for *Erwartung* was to clarify the blurred experiences of the human experience that are born from extreme tension. It is also highlighted in this article that Schoenberg composed the opera in only two weeks, similar to the creation of Eugene O'Neil's (1888-1953) *The Emperor Jones* (1920). *The Emperor Jones* and *Erwartung* feature nature as a catalyst for deeper self-reflection from the protagonists, especially from the moonlit stage and the portrayal of wind in both works.

Hoover analyzes *Die Glückliche Hand* in-depth in her Master's Thesis "Sound, Light, and Motion." She bases her analysis on Schoenberg's compositions, stage direction, and Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*.⁹ In his treatise¹⁰, Kandinsky suggests that color can alter the vibration of the human soul, which he calls *spiritual vibration*. Even though scientific literature cannot explain this dynamic color theory, Kandinsky asserts that a "purely spiritual experience" is enough rationale to support the connection with the psyche. His color theory is rooted in horizontal motion or "inner appeal," which has two options: either towards the spiritual side or away from the spiritual side, depending on the spectator. He also suggests that color has a

⁸ Wallace Dace, "The Dramatic Structure of Schönberg's 'Erwartung,'" *Educational Theatre Journal* 5, no. 4 (1953): 322.

⁹ Hoover, "Sound, Light and Motion," iv.

¹⁰ Hoover, "Sound, Light, and Motion," 26; here Hoover refers to Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*.

second kind of inherent motion and is not limited to the horizontal plane. When the “inner appeal” and inherent motion of color combine, the “shades of appeal” are born, aiding the color’s spirituality. For example, Kandinsky explains that if lightness is added to yellow, movement increases outward and weakens its connection to the inner soul. If darkness is added to yellow, however, then the movement shifts inward, inching its way toward internal truth. The darkest colors offer the strongest connection to our psyche and spiritual selves. That is why Hoover emphasizes the color violet in her analysis of *The Woman in Die Glückliche Hand*. According to Kandinsky,¹¹ blue has a strong inward and concentric motion. Red, on the other hand, has no particular motion—it moves within itself. Adding blue to red, therefore, intensifies the inward motion of blue, creating a stronger connection to the inner self.

In his article, “On the Analytical Tradition” Knight uncovers the discussion surrounding *Erwartung*. He challenges the discourse community and asserts a new light on this work. One perspective he offers is the allusions to the myth of Orpheus, but with reversed gender roles.¹² Both *Die Frau* and Orpheus enter a realm of uncertainty, armed only with music. He explains the allusion further by noting Classical antiquity’s opposing rational effects on the written language. He argues that *Erwartung* utilizes the same tactics by “resisting the rationalizing effects of exhaustive systematic analysis.”¹³ Knight also offers the perspectives of literary scholars Jean-Pierre Vernant (1914-2007) and Pierre Vidal-Naquet (1930-2006), “Myth is either defined negatively in terms of what it lacks or fails to offer, as non-sense, non-reason, non-truth, non-reality or—if it is granted any positive mode of being—it is explained away as something

¹¹ Hoover, “Sound, Light, and Motion,” 34; here Hoover refers to Kandinsky’s *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*

¹² Russel Knight, “On the Analytical Tradition of Schoenberg’s *Erwartung* (Op. 17),” *Indiana Theory Review* 34, no. 1–2 (2017): 77.

¹³ Knight, “On the Analytical Tradition,” 85.

other than itself.”¹⁴ Even though this myth provides allegorical lessons, the nature of it, according to Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, is rooted in irrationality. These allusions to the myth of Orpheus imply that the plot of *Erwartung* is also rooted in non-reason.

Structuredness of Music

There is much debate over the structure of *Erwartung*. Some scholars, such as Herbert Buchanan, argue that the work is more tonal and thematic than previously perceived by the public.¹⁵ Other scholars, like Charles Rosen, argue that *Erwartung* is completely athematic and atonal, even considering Buchanan’s argument. In his book, *Arnold Schoenberg*, Rosen covers the complex and athematic features of *Erwartung*, specifically in the “Atonality” chapter. Rosen admits to there being some instances of stability and motivic qualities in the monodrama. Still, he argues that the tonal stability and thematic elements do not last long enough to justify the label as a “tonal” or “thematic” piece of music.

Every eighteenth-century work, for example, is full of rising and descending thirds, but nothing permits us to claim this as a motif until it is *contextually* given this status within the work, and for this there must be a confluence of rhythm, harmony, and texture lacking in *Erwartung*.¹⁶

¹⁴ Knight, “On the Analytical Tradition,” 86.

¹⁵ Herbert Buchanan, “A Key to Schoenberg’s *Erwartung* (Op. 17),” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 20, no. 3 (1967): 435. <https://doi.org/10.2307/830319>.

¹⁶ Charles Rosen, “Atonality,” in *Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York Viking Press: 1975):

He explains further that the triad drives the occurrence of motives, and the motive's ability to modulate and return to the tonic is the key to making motives effective in tonal music. According to Rosen, Schoenberg realized this and decided to abolish the idea of "triads," approaching music from a completely different perspective and thus creating atonality. His relationship with the triad is crucial to understanding his new compositional approach. Avoiding the triad was his goal, and instead, he utilized six-note chord collections as the compositional basis for *Erwartung*. Even though these six-note chords provide compositional consistency, they do not provide stability. These chords relish in the dissonance without resolutions. According to Rosen, Schoenberg reconstructs the idea of dissonance, consonance, and resolution to create a truly athenatic and atonal piece.

In his article, "In Schoenberg's Workshop: Aggregates and Referential Collections in 'Die Glückliche Hand,'" Auner outlines the compositional importance *Die Glückliche Hand* serves in the atonal movement. What he discovered in Schoenberg's extensive sketches of *Die Glückliche Hand* was the "establishment of referential collections of pitch classes from which melodies and harmonies can be derived and the systematic employment of all twelve tones."¹⁷ During his early work with *Die Glückliche Hand*, Schoenberg treated referential pitch classes as separate entities and they were not supposed to create unity within the monodrama.¹⁸ When analyzing his early sketches of *Die Glückliche Hand*, his approach mirrored the writing technique of *Erwartung*: sporadic and minimal writing. As time went on, however, Schoenberg systematically organized these pitches.

¹⁷ Joseph Auner, "In Schoenberg's Workshop: Aggregates and Referential Collections in 'Die Glückliche Hand,'" *Music Theory Spectrum* 18, no. 1 (March 1, 1996): 79. <https://doi.org/10.2307/745846>.

¹⁸ Auner, "In Schoenberg's Workshop," 87.

By the time he completed *Die Glückliche Hand* in 1913, he had reluctantly begun to regard the direct expression of his ‘unconscious sensations’ as an unattainable ideal. This aesthetic reorientation was reflected in his changing approach to musical structure and the compositional process as the work evolved. In the later stages of the work from 1912-13, Schoenberg reintroduced thematic and motivic structure, canonic imitation, and form based on small- and large-scale repetition.¹⁹

Schoenberg planned to use several compositional devices throughout it, such as the referential hexachord, a collection of the pitches D-F-B \flat -D \flat -G-A. Although not always found in that particular order, these pitches were initially planned to link major dramatic events. After realizing the hexachord was not conducive to the projection of the project, Schoenberg switched this technique to the “color crescendo,” the point at which wind, light, and color “crescendo” together. This was a more effective way to incorporate the motivic elements Schoenberg strived for since it “demonstrates the derivation of a substantial amount of melodic and accompanimental material from small collections of pitch classes and their related pitch-class sets.”²⁰ Schoenberg uses these devices with “traditional form” to create motifs and a sense of structure.

Russell Knight also provides commentary on Schoenberg’s compositional approach. He does not analyze the work but instead outlines the discourse surrounding the subject. There are four notable scholars he highlights: Carl Dahlhaus (1928-1989), Philip Lessem (1940-1991), Herbert Buchanan (1937-2012), and Charles Rosen. Knight begins by summarizing Dahlhaus’s

¹⁹ Auner, “In Schoenberg’s Workshop,” 84.

²⁰ Auner, “In Schoenberg’s Workshop,” 88.

work, in which Dahlhaus explains, “These judgments [referring to historians’ opinions on *Erwartung*] are clearly based on the idea that expression and form or structure are mutually opposed as if one principle predominated at the expense of the other.”²¹ Dahlhaus argues that *Erwartung* contains more musical structure than previously suggested and explains that Schoenberg drew from older compositional techniques like recitativo accompagnato and chamber polyphony. Dahlhaus’s sentiment is much like Buchanan’s argument. Buchanan influenced much of Lessem’s work on *Erwartung*. Lessem explains that musical events drive character expressions, like the short motivic cells representing her shifting moods and behaviors. Even though Knight explains this discourse, he challenges all of the work put forth by these scholars by recognizing and acknowledging a gap in their analysis.

It is positive in the sense that it affirms analytical approaches, motivated by what is *present* in the musical structure, no matter how temporary they appear: recurring motivic cells, emphasis on the minor/major third, D-minor-based configurations, recurring text-motive associations, and polyphonic writing... This negative focus emphasizes what is *absent* in the work in order to describe the ways in which expressive character ultimately cancels out any convincing interpretation of musical structure, as if Schoenberg’s compositional technique is a kind of preemptive strike against logic and continuity.²²

Knight stresses Schoenberg’s prioritization of breaking from tradition and letting the subconscious dictate the musical outcome rather than focusing on a non-existent form structure.

²¹ Knight, “On the Analytical Tradition,” 88-87; Knight here refers to Lessem’s work *Music and Text in the Works of Arnold Schoenberg: The Critical Years, 1908–1922*.

²² Knight, “On the Analytical Tradition,” 89.

He notes that other scholars, like David Hamilton (1935-2013), attempt to share the same assertion that Rosen illustrates but fails to provide concrete evidence since their foundation lies in subjective experience. Ultimately, Knight uses Rosen's work as the prime example of Schoenberg's intention with *Erwartung*.

Freudian Influence

There are several reasons why musicologists classify *Erwartung* as a psychoanalytical work. In his article, "Schoenberg's Vienna, Freud's Vienna," Carpenter argues that *Erwartung* demonstrates—through its overarching themes and textual details—an awareness of both the history and practice of Freudian psychoanalysis. He outlines his argument from the perspective of Schoenberg and Marie Pappenheim and suggests that both parties knew more about psychoanalysis than initially thought. When considering Schoenberg's interpretation of the psychoanalytical movement, Carpenter states "The composer was preoccupied with his own psychic unrest and was exploring a compositional aesthetic predicated on the expression of the unconscious."²³ He further explains Schoenberg's life from 1908-1909 and the emotional turmoil he endured from the affair of his wife and painter Richard Gerstl (1883-1908), his lack of compositional success, and financial strife. These struggles he faced occurred during his atonal period, in which the vast majority of his pieces explore the idea of destroyed love.²⁴ Carpenter groups Schoenberg's compositions written from 1908-09 as "psychoanalytic" since they reflect the composer's grappling with his neurosis and repressed memories—which conveniently mirrors

²³ Alexander Carpenter, "Schoenberg's Vienna, Freud's Vienna: Re-Examining the Connections between the Monodrama *Erwartung* and the Early History of Psychoanalysis," *The Musical Quarterly* 93, no. 1 (2010): 145.

²⁴ Carpenter, "Schoenberg's Vienna, Freud's Vienna," 145; here Carpenter references H.H Stuckenschmidt's *Arnold Schoenberg: His Life, Work and World*, where he describes *Erwartung* and *Die Glückliche Hand* with the phrase "drama of destroyed love."

Freud's work with the unconscious. It is possible that Freud and Schoenberg personally knew each other,²⁵ but it is more likely that they heard of each other through their mutual professional connections. Marie Pappenheim, on the other hand, had a more direct connection to Freud. Carpenter explains that Marie Pappenheim was Bertha Pappenheim's (1859-1936) second cousin, once removed. Bertha Pappenheim, more commonly known by her pseudonym, Anna O., was an Austrian social pioneer. She was most famous for her treatment by her physician Josef Breuer (1842-1925) documented by Freud during his early analysis of hysteria. Because of this connection, Carpenter asserts that Marie Pappenheim imbedded Freudian ideology and theory into the story of *Erwartung*. There are uncanny parallels between the Anna O. case and Die Frau in *Erwartung*, such as the period of amnesia and flashes of disturbing memories. Anna O., however, was not the only source of inspiration for Marie Pappenheim. Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* and *Studies on Hysteria* are possible contenders for inspiration since they were both published when Pappenheim studied medicine at the University of Vienna. Freud's case studies, particularly the "Dora case," feature two key elements of psychoanalytic theory: hysteria and dream analysis. These elements are also present in *Erwartung* since "*Erwartung's* Woman, as a hysteric, is a synthesis of several of Freud's patients...[and] the monodrama's rich symbolic landscape clearly evokes Freud's desire-laden dream world, with its 'symbolic geography of sex.'"²⁶

Despite Carpenter's arguments, Laura McLary offers a different perspective for Marie Pappenheim. In her article, "The Dead Lover's Body and the Woman's Rage," McLary suggests that Pappenheim's text in *Erwartung* is derivative and reinvents the connections between

²⁵ Carpenter, "Schoenberg's Vienna, Freud's Vienna," 148.

²⁶ Carpenter, "Schoenberg's Vienna, Freud's Vienna," 158.

literature and science. McLary agrees with Carpenter that “[b]y 1909, Pappenheim was most certainly familiar with the works of Breuer and Freud on hysteria, *Studien über Hysterie*, published in 1895,”²⁷ but chooses to focus on Pappenheim’s contemporary Otto Weininger (1880-1903), an Austrian philosopher, to elaborate on Pappenheim’s interpretation of female sexuality. Because Pappenheim was an educated member of society, she undoubtedly read the works of Weininger. He influenced an entire generation and the scientific community through his work *Geschlecht und Charakter*, which summarized the writings on sexual research. Through Weininger’s work, he instilled a misogynistic ideology into the scientific literature based only on pseudo-science.

Despite Weininger’s claim that both male and female elements reside in all human beings regardless of physiological sex, his argument devolves into a deterministic equation of female gender with the particularly regressive and uncivilized traits he associates with the feminine... Weininger advocates, therefore, that each man, intellectually and morally the superior of every woman, must abstain from sexual intercourse to save the woman from herself and to avoid lowering himself into the dark morass of the feminine.²⁸

Die Frau’s journey of recognition, denial, and acceptance displays Weininger’s claims. When Die Frau first encounters her husband, she is seemingly stable. As she realizes that her husband has passed and remembers his infidelity, she becomes unstable. “Clearly, this is a woman completely bereft of moral judgment, capable of transgressing civilized taboos

²⁷ Laura A. McLary, “The Dead Lover’s Body and the Woman’s Rage: Marie Pappenheim’s ‘Erwartung,’” *Colloquia Germanica* 34 (2001): 259.

²⁸ McLary, “The Dead Lover’s Body and the Woman’s Rage,” 260.

forbidding sex with and desecration of corpses.”²⁹ McLary explains that *Die Frau* has trouble identifying herself when in the presence of her passed husband since he was the only anchor in her life, to which the questions beg, “How can a woman exist or be a subject when a man is absent?” and “How can I be when he is not?”³⁰ These are the questions that Pappenheim asked herself when writing *Erwartung* as a reflection of modern society.

This literature review outlines the writings concerning Schoenberg’s scenic visions, with commentary from Beck, Dace, Hoover, and Knight. Hoover, most notably, provided an in-depth analysis of Schoenberg’s use of color in *Die Glückliche Hand* and how each color represented a version of *Der Mann*’s soul, more specifically through *The Woman*. Knight also provided discourse surrounding *Erwartung* and how the allusions to mythological stories imply a nonsensical foundation in *Erwartung*’s plot. Among literature related to the structuredness of music and the observations most relevant to this paper, Knight underscored the athenatic nature of *Erwartung* due to no stable motivic qualities in the composition, and, Auner, along with the chronology of *Die Glückliche Hand*, points to the presence of traditional, tonal component, especially near the end of the composing process. Lastly, literature discussing Freud’s influence on Schoenberg’s writing highlights ideas of the subconscious. Carpenter discusses not only Freud’s impact on Schoenberg but also Freud’s influence on Marie Pappenheim and her readings of Freud’s case studies. McLary, on the other hand, offers the perspective of Otto Weininger, who compiled all of the sexual research during the early 20th century into one source, *Geschlecht und Charakter*. She also highlights *Die Frau*’s progression through the absence of a man.

²⁹ McLary, “The Dead Lover’s Body and the Woman’s Rage,” 265.

³⁰ McLary, “The Dead Lover’s Body and the Woman’s Rage,” 261.

Analysis of Schoenberg's Theatrical and Compositional Elements

Color and Intention

Schoenberg's contemporaries influenced him, most notably Kokoshka and Kandinsky. These two artists drove the ideas of expressionist art, and Schoenberg certainly had his hand in the mix. Although most known for his compositions, Schoenberg contributed to the expressionist movement through his paintings. His most famous painting could be *The Red Gaze* (1910), which is most likely a self-portrait. It depicts an expression of a person with a striking red glaze overlaying their eyes. When comparing *The Red Gaze* to Kokoshka's *Self Portrait* from 1917, both artists seemingly use a similar painting approach. Large, intense brush strokes create a blurred effect, free from structure or reason. The paint application in these are also highly textured and undefined. Schoenberg also observed these characteristics in his *Blue Self Portrait* (1910), where he used similar blue hues to Kokoshka's self-portrait. Considering these qualities, it is vital to note that Schoenberg used these characteristics in his other paintings. He often translated his vision of his musical works on paper during the composing process, as seen in *Die Glückliche Hand* and *Erwartung*. Schoenberg created his vision of the second scene of *Die Glückliche Hand* with oil on cardboard. In this oil painting, as seen in Figure 1, there are clear lines indicating the stage, a blue backdrop representing the sky, and a yellow circle with rays symbolizing the sun. Even though it is clear that this painting showcases the sunrise at the beginning of the second scene, it is not devoid of expressionist qualities. There are large brush strokes, particularly in the sun's rays, and the texture of the oil is thick and intense.



Figure 1. Schoenberg's envisaged sunrise backdrop for Scene II in *Die Glückliche Hand* (Painting by Arnold Schoenberg, October 1910. Source: Belmont Music Publishers).

When comparing this painting to Schoenberg's watercolor of *Erwartung*, it is clear that the two are strikingly different. The watercolor depicts a forest with one tree dominating the foreground on the left side of the painting (Figure 2). There are also chiaroscuro differences on the left side—the more light and colorful side—and the right side—the dark side. What is most important to note about this painting are the lines and the lack of structure in their placement. It gives it an organic feel but also an unorganized feel. When looking at the dark side of the painting, the lines indicate no real foreground or background. What it does showcase, however, is a mystical and looming mood, much like Die Frau's experience in the story.



Figure 2. Schoenberg's watercolor vision for *Erwartung* (Painting by Arnold Schoenberg, 1924. Source: Belmont Music Publishers).

It would be difficult to dismiss an analysis of color through Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* when discussing these paintings, considering his influence on Schoenberg. When looking at Schoenberg's vision of the second scene in the oil painting, one of the most striking colors is yellow. As Hoover outlined earlier, yellow moves ex-concentrically outwards from its center and does not reflect the inner workings of the soul. This movement contrasts with the light blue background since blue moves concentrically inward toward its center, revealing internal truth. Yellow and blue, because they are inherently opposite from each other, create a sense of disjunction. The two strong movement patterns fight one another, and it is unclear which direction the scene is going. It is only clear when Schoenberg introduces the color violet. Hoover comments that violet has a strong inward, concentric motion since the addition of red intensifies the inward motion of the color blue. These distinctions are crucial when analyzing *The Woman*. She enters Scene 2 bathed in the color violet, both in the lighting and her garments. Since *Der Mann* reflects the human soul and *The Woman* is reflected *as* the deepest state of the human soul

through the color violet, she represents the inner processes of Der Mann in this scene. Schoenberg shows her function specifically through the handoff of the chalice. The Woman enters the scene with a chalice, which also is lit in a violet hue. She eventually offers the chalice to Der Mann, leaving her in a hostile state and disinterested in Der Mann. Her mood only brightens when she sees The Gentleman or the next available man in sight. Even though The Woman returns to Der Mann pleading for forgiveness, it is clear that she has changed, or rather, Der Mann's soul has changed. Der Mann has musically referred to The Woman with minor seconds in his vocal line. When The Woman returns to Der Mann, Schoenberg abolishes this motif. Schoenberg implies that The Woman needs Der Mann, or some man wrapped around her arm, otherwise, she does not know how to function. According to Kandinsky's color theory and Hoover's analysis, the nature of The Woman is inherently subservient.

Black, green, and blue are the most notable colors when observing the watercolor of *Erwartung*. The color black takes up most of the painting, and according to Kandinsky, the darker the color is, the more inward its motion. Since black is the darkest color, it remains motionless, "absolute discord, devoid of possibilities for the future."³¹ It functions to end an idea or thought so that another may begin. Black is similar to white in that white is also motionless. But the difference is that white is in "eternal discord, but with possibilities for the future."³² Even though white is considered motionless, it catalyzes possibilities. It is only waiting for a color to give it motion. Curiously, Schoenberg would use black instead of white in this watercolor, even though both of their characteristics are motionless. Deciding to create a forest out of mishappen

³¹ Hoover, "Sound, Light, and Motion," 37; here Hoover refers to Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*.

³² Hoover, "Sound, Light, and Motion," 37; here Hoover refers to Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*.

black lines indicates Die Frau's collapse. She becomes dysfunctional when knowing the identity of the deceased body. It is almost as if her world has ended, much like what the black in the watercolor suggests. As discussed earlier, blue is a dark color and indicates inward motion. On the other hand, green consists of both a light and dark color, indicating the potential of motion. These colors on the left side of the painting suggest the potential inner reflection of herself, but since black dominates the painting, there is little room left for Die Frau's internal truth. Even though the painting implies Die Frau's lack of inner truth from the extensive amount of black, one factor reveals a potential motion from the show. In the premiere of *Erwartung*, Die Frau enters with long, flowing white robes. White, although motionless, indicates the possibility of motion. The black scenery and white garments create an overwhelming sensation of stagnation, but it also makes it unclear what direction the motion of color is going. Is there an end to Die Frau's inner truth, or is there potential for a reflection of her soul?

From these paintings and Schoenberg's execution on stage, there are implications of subservient behaviors from the women. The violet hues from The Woman in *Die Glückliche Hand* indicate that she is only there to reflect Der Mann's soul and is otherwise dysfunctional without a man's presence. Similarly, the black features of *Erwartung* suggest an ending to any reflection of inner truth, but the white implies the possibility of motion. It is difficult to determine if there is potential for motion based on the juxtaposition of these colors. Schoenberg executed the colors in these performances with clear targets. Even though he may not have intended this, his use of color—based on Kandinsky's work—shows women in a submissive role.

Thematic Impact

Many atonal composers, including Schoenberg, found it convenient to write through-composed rather than in strophic fashion. Even though several atonal compositions seem to stand the test of time, like Alban Berg's (1885-1935) *Wozzeck*, audiences find that through-composed music is less engaging than strophic music. Huron discusses in his article "A Psychological Approach to Musical Form: The Habituation-fluency Theory of Repetition" the importance of repetition in music and how two phenomena occur when music repeats: processing fluency and habituation. Processing fluency creates an enjoyable listening experience for the audience since our cognitive bias triggers a positive response when presented with easily understood material. Repetition, however, also leads to habituation, a process in which the material is repeated so many times that we become less responsive. Huron offered many composing strategies to mitigate the occurrence of habituation and increase processing fluency, like (ornamental) variation, and rondo strategies. Although repetition may lead to undesirable outcomes, like a lower response rate, Huron emphasized that repetition is needed for the listener to engage with the music.

In "Musical Creativity and the Human Brain" Brattico and Tervaniemi outline a similar argument as Huron. They argue that music is more engaging for the listener when they recognize familiar structural forms in an unfamiliar work. Even though the piece of music is unfamiliar to the listener, they can instantly predict and even compose new parts of the piece because they follow a familiar formula. They also provided the research surrounding brain activation when test subjects are given a structured melody and random noise bursts. They referenced the works

of Zatorre and Patterson, who both concluded that structured melodies activate more areas of the brain—specifically the associative auditory cortex—when compared to random bursts of noise.³³ Huron, Brattico, and Tervaniemi assert that a clear melody line is necessary for an engaged audience and active brain processing. Schoenberg’s melodies, however, are certainly structured but are not memorable. According to the literature, this happens because there is nothing familiar about the structuring of his music. The compositional difference between *Erwartung* and *Die Glückliche Hand* is that Schoenberg incorporated more tonal and thematic elements in *Die Glückliche Hand*.

Considering the athenatic elements of *Erwartung* and the tonal influences of *Die Glückliche Hand*, Schoenberg seemingly approached these two works differently. He fully immersed himself in the subconscious tone of *Erwartung*, explaining that sensations are inherently “illogical” and he wanted to express the unconscious illogic through *Die Frau*.³⁴ This compositional style manifested in his lack of dependency on musical sketches. He hardly revised the initial writings of *Erwartung* since he wanted to surrender to the unconscious. Schoenberg began writing *Die Glückliche Hand* similarly, relying less on sketches and more on the unconscious. This approach was eventually abandoned, and Schoenberg’s reasoning is unclear: “I am working remarkably slowly this time, more slowly than ever before. Although this ‘material’ interests me very much. As yet I have no idea why that is.”³⁵ Even though the reasoning is unknown, the abandonment of unconscious ideals and allowing more time for composing lead to tonal and motivic qualities that are not present in *Erwartung*. At the beginning

³³ Elvira Braticco and Mari Tervaniemi, “Musical Creativity and the Human Brain,” *Musical Creativity*, (October 16, 2006): 294; here Braticco and Tervaniemi reference Patterson’s *The processing of temporal pitch and melody information in auditory cortex* and Zatorre’s *Recognition of dichotic melodies by musicians and non-musicians*.

³⁴ Auner, “In Schoenberg’s Workshop,” 83.

³⁵ Auner, “In Schoenberg’s Workshop,” 84.

of the third scene in *Die Glückliche Hand*, for example, there is a melodic line introduced from all the instruments in unison. This melody is passed off to the horns and violins until there is a break in the music and a new idea begins.



Figure 3 Sketch of *Die Glückliche Hand*'s 3rd Scene from Schoenberg's manuscript (source: Arnold Schoenberg Center)

Auner also indicates Schoenberg's use of referential pitch collections as a new way to envision and incorporate motivic qualities.³⁶ In Schoenberg's earlier sketches of *Die Glückliche Hand*, he wanted to link dramatic and pivotal moments to this referential hexachord:

D-F-B \flat -D \flat -G-A. After realizing that using a color crescendo is more effective than this hexachord, Schoenberg decided to label two thematic occurrences: Motive X and Motive Y, as shown in Figure 3. Motive X consists of the pitches B \flat -A-B, as two sixteenth notes followed by an eighth or quarter note. Motive Y is the repetition of the dyads E \flat -F and D-F# and is not defined by a rhythm like Motive X. What bridges these two motives is this referential collection that occurs throughout the passage: C-E-G#-B and C-D#-G#-B. These motives first appear in m.

³⁶ Auner, "In Schoenberg's Workshop," 88.

125 and reappear throughout the third scene. Even though Auner outlines the compositional technique, he fails to contextualize the impact of this color crescendo. During these occurrences of motives, Der Mann reencounters The Woman, under the impression that she is still in his grasp. The Woman appears on stage, with the top half of her dress missing. She ultimately leaves Der Mann for The Gentleman, and the beast reappears on Der Mann's back, and the story ends how it began. These motives provide a sense of structure and predictability within the scene. It is almost as if they predict The Woman's behaviors, and reinforce how women will instinctually leave a man only to find a new one. The thematic elements are also inherently more memorable since motives increase brain activity. It seems as though Schoenberg wanted the audience to remember this scene, and how women's infidelity will lead to a man's downfall.

Schoenberg's two-week compositional process for *Erwartung* made for a musical experience that is not as cohesive as *Die Glückliche Hand's* three-year process. Both are certainly organized, but Schoenberg's reliance on the subconscious rather than secure coherency may have translated as a hasty composition. It is also curious that he chose to only spend two weeks on a story about a woman, whereas he spent three years perfecting a story about a man. The thematic qualities and lack of time spent with *Erwartung* make a less engaging experience for the audience when compared with *Die Glückliche Hand's* return to traditional compositional approaches.

Expressionism v Stagnation

During the expressionist movement, there was a push from artists to reimagine our vision of the world. These artists, including Schoenberg, distorted their perspective of society, which produced unprecedented art. An important factor to note about the expressionist movement was its male dominance. Some women did contribute to the movement, like Mary Abbott (1921-2019) and Jay DeFeo (1929-1989), but the ideas and most well-known work were produced by men. This male-dominated space is observed in the revolutionized approach to psychology by Freud, Breuer, and Weiniger. Art and psychology cannot truly represent society if the creators do not acknowledge all identities. Expressionists wanted a new world. They, however, only wanted a new world for *themselves*. They insisted that women should stay in their boxes. In their equation for a new world, the men were the variables, and the women were the constants. Freud followed this equation as well and experimented on women with the tired assumption that they were “hysterical.” If he wanted to revolutionize the psychological field, wouldn’t he explore that women are just as sane as men are? Instead, he attempted to prove that women are domestic tools for men and, if they step outside of their box, they become unstable. Schoenberg is no exception to this treatment of women. Even though he left the writing of *Erwartung* up to Marie Pappenheim, he still made edits to the text. He could not leave the writing solely in the hands of a woman, as shown in Figure 4. McLary notes that “Nonetheless, sufficient documentation exists to prove that Pappenheim conceived of the idea herself, composed the text in a matter of days, and expected Schoenberg to suggest changes written it, suggesting only that a few passages be cut.”³⁷

³⁷ McLary, “The Dead Lover’s Body and the Woman’s Rage,” 258; here McLary refers to the works of Weissweiler, *Schreiben Sie mir doch einen Operntext, Fräulein! Marie Pappenheims Text zu Schoenbergs Erwartung*, and Simm’s, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg*.



Figure 4. Sketch of Marie Pappenheim's text of *Erwartung*, with Schoenberg's edits (source: Arnold Schoenberg Center)

Pappenheim undoubtedly wrote the text for *Erwartung*, but she expected Schoenberg to suggest edits. This expectation could have been for logistical reasons, or it could have been for ingrained gender roles—that women could not produce work without the approval of a man. Even though expressionist figures wanted to distort their vision of the world, they were unwilling to accept different perspectives. They had to dominate the artistic movement and have the final say in the work produced during this time.

Discussion on the Portrayal of Women in Opera Today

Schoenberg's portrayal of women in *Erwartung* and *Die Glückliche Hand* displays them as hysterical, especially through his aesthetic vision and approach to composition. He decided to prioritize his musical advancements rather than give space for women to grow and be seen in a similar light to men. It is not as if he abandoned the plot's integrity in each show, but he chose to show women in the same light as they had been for centuries. In my experience as a woman in opera productions, I have always engaged in conversations about the role of the woman characters. I often joke with my castmates that the "woman is crazy" and disregard the treatment of them. After analyzing a person who forever changed the way we approach music and his, perhaps, subconscious treatment of women, I wondered why some operatic composers resist the idea of intelligent women. Since opera's conception, the subject of women has been a sensitive topic given that castrati had to play women characters until the mid-19th century. These men who played women characters did not know what it was like to be a woman, so they relied on stereotypes to depict the desired outcome, much like the opera composers and librettists who were predominantly male as well. At opera's conception, men composed the music, men wrote the text, and men played the women. The only representation of opera was through the male gaze, therefore the foundation of opera is rooted in a caricature of women, and these traits are seen even in the early 20th century. In my observation of contemporary opera, I have noticed that operatic composers have moved away from the "irrational woman" trope, most notably by Jake Heggie's (b. 1961) *Dead Man Walking* and Kevin Puts' (b. 1972) *The Hours*. These plots display strong women characters and their struggles in their womanly experiences. Even though societal pressure encourages contemporary composers to move away from heavy gender stereotypes, are

those the kinds of performances that audiences want to attend? What is most notable about *Dead Man Walking* and *The Hours* is that they are through-composed. As discussed previously, through-composed music makes it difficult for the audience to grasp the material because our brains enjoy the predictability of music to an extent. When listening to these contemporary works, I have found that there is little to no material that is singable or memorable. We have seen composers write through-composed vocal lines since the Baroque period, but Schoenberg might have contributed to the normative patterns of using through-composed music in classical vocal works. Many operas written to this day are through-composed and difficult to program into opera seasons. When looking at The Metropolitan Opera ticket sales for the 2023-24 season, the highest-selling productions were Bizet's *Carmen* with 84% of tickets sold and Mozart's *Der Zauberflöte* with 87%.³⁸ One of the highest-selling contemporary operas that The Met programmed during this season was *Dead Man Walking* but it only sold 62% of the available tickets.³⁹ This issue is not exclusive to The Met since I have witnessed contemporary operas struggle to sell. These operatic composers are creating strong women characters, but no one seems to care. Audiences would rather experience something familiar or musical material with memorable melodies and bear the harmful depiction of women. This lack of engagement in contemporary opera makes me think about the popularity of opera as a whole. Opera, most notably in the 18th-20th centuries, was one of the main forms of vocal expression. During the 21st century, however, opera became a niche when it was once a praised art form. Could this be because of contemporary opera's resistance to strophic patterns? The staged art form that has surpassed opera in terms of popularity is musical theater. From my experience, the reason why musical theater is popular is because of its simple, strophic patterns that are somewhat easy to

³⁸ Ronald Blum, "Financially Struggling Met Opera's 18 productions next season matches the fewest since 1980-81," *AP News*, February 21st, 2024.

³⁹ Blum, "Financially Struggling Met."

sing along and *remember*. Composers like George Gershwin (1898-1937) and Irving Berlin (1888-1989) valued and prioritized writing memorable melodies during musical theater's conception from the late 19th century into the early 20th century. It is interesting to note that as atonality and the normalization of through-composed vocal lines emerged in the opera scene, musical theater became more popular.

Opera composers today seem to find themselves in the same predicament that Schoenberg found himself in prioritizing musical advancement. For new operas to be successful, composers have to put aside their compositional priorities and create memorable music for the audience. The ultimate goal of opera is to tell a story, but the only way to tell a story is for the audience to engage in the material. I am certainly not saying that contemporary composers completely have to forgo any or all musical advancements because there is space for that. For the women characters to be seen as rational and intelligent, however, composers have to write music that is not just appealing to their ears but to a mass audience. If this were to occur, perhaps we would see new opera sell just as well as *Carmen* or *Der Zauberflöte*.

Schoenberg set a dangerous precedent when writing *Erwartung* and *Die Glückliche Hand*. He not only displayed women as irrational, he paved a new way for vocal music that dominated the classical music scene for over a century. Even though composers today are abandoning the “crazy woman” trope, their compositional approach is rooted in Schoenberg's precedent, hindering the exposure of their work. If contemporary composers included more strophic patterns in their work, it would perhaps be more memorable. If the music served what the audience wanted, we might finally see women not as “crazy” or “irrational” but as strong and intelligent.

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