

Music and Musical Culture in Vienna around 1900

Markus Grassl

February 5 – 16, 2024

4 ECTS

Course Description

The musical culture in Vienna around 1900 is widely renowned for its exceptional creativity and innovative capacity. The protagonists and the achievements commonly associated with this vital period in music history – e.g. Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schönberg and his “Second Viennese School” – for a long time also stood at the center of musicological research on 20th century music. In recent years, however, the perspective has been broadened substantially, mainly due to the impact of the intensified work on Viennese modernism in other humanities and in cultural studies. As a consequence, the musical culture in fin-de-siècle Vienna became visible as a complex phenomenon characterized by radical shifts as well as continuities with the past and even by contradictory tendencies.

The course will try to address the topic from several vantage points:

- The institutions, organizations, and spaces of musical life, in relation to the diverse strata of the musical public and to the pertinent political and social conditions.
- The wide array of musical styles and repertoires present at that time, resulting not only from the contemporary compositional activities (which were multi-layered in itself, ranging from “radical modernism” to popular music), but also from the ongoing relevance of earlier music.
- The diverse aesthetical positions and general views on music, comprising newly developed scientific approaches as well as metaphysical idealizations and even ideologically conditioned functionalizations.
- The interrelations between the developments in music and in other intellectual and artistic fields, leading to the question, how music can or has to be integrated into a comprehensive concept of *Viennese Modernism* around 1900.

Requirements: **Regular attendance and active participation** in class discussions constitute 20%, **reading** of an article (including a written abstract) 30% and a **written final exam** 50% of the grade.

Syllabus

1st week

Monday, February 5, 2024
11:00 am – 1:00 pm

Introduction:
Time frame: ca. 1890–1920 as period in music history (“age of modernism”)
General aspects of *modernization* – parallels in music / generational shift / changes after WW 1.

Tuesday, February 6, 2024
11:00 am – 1:00 pm

Viennese musical culture in the 1890s:
dominant figures: Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) and Richard Wagner (1813–1883); main musical and aesthetic characteristics, different relation to music history and tradition – classicism vs. teleological progress / absolute music (Eduard Hanslick) vs. music as a means of conveying narrative and “extramusical” content.

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| <p>Wednesday, February 7, 2024 11:00 am – 1:00 pm</p> | <p>Institutions and Venues of Music-Making: traditional institutions: esp. <i>k .u. k. Hofoper</i> (court opera) – Mahler as director 1897–1907 – and <i>Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde</i> (society for friends of music), vs. new developments and innovations c. 1900, e.g. foundation and “idea” of <i>Konzerthaus</i> (1913); social background of the audiences, modernism, and music politics; music journalism and music publishing industry (foundation of <i>Universal Edition</i> 1901).</p> |
| <p>Thursday, February 8, 2024 11:00 am – 1:00 pm</p> | <p>Gustav Mahler: Biographical survey – cultural context; Mahler’s music – general features: fusion of genres, scoring / “Mahler’s sound”, the aesthetic idea of the symphony. Discussion of Mahler’s Symphony No. 2 as an example. Discussion of Leon Botstein, “Gustav Mahler’s Vienna”, in: Donald Mitchell (ed.), <i>The Mahler Compendium</i>, Oxford 1999, pp. 6–38.</p> |
| <p>Friday, February 9, 2024 11:00 am – 1:00 pm</p> | <p>Continuing the above topic</p> |
| <p>2nd week</p> | |
| <p>Monday, February 12, 2024 11:00 am – 1:00 pm</p> | <p>The “Second Viennese School”: Compass and impact; Schönberg – Berg – Webern; “atonality”; SVS and tradition (genres, form, polyphonic texture, “developing variation”).</p> |
| <p>Tuesday, February 13, 2024 11:00 am – 1:00 pm</p> | <p>Arnold Schönberg: Survey on the “creative biography” of Schönberg; the predominance of song in the early works; late 19th century modernism and the fusion of genres; turn to atonality; expressionism in music.</p> |
| <p>Wednesday, February 14, 2021 11:00 am – 1:00 pm</p> | <p>Music and (Viennese) Modernism: “progressive” vs. “conservative” tendencies; “late romanticism” and the different layers of modern music in Vienna c. 1900 (Franz Schreker, Wilhelm Kienzl, Franz Schmidt). Comparison with other European avant-garde movements of the early 20th century (esp. Italian futurism).</p> |
| <p>Wednesday, February 14, 2021 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm</p> | <p>Excursion: Schönberg Center</p> |
| <p>Thursday, February 15, 2021 11:00 am – 1:00 pm</p> | <p>Popular Music – Operetta: Musical entertainment culture in general: the <i>Etablissements</i> (establishments); <i>Schrammelmusik</i> as phenomenon of Vienna around 1900; Viennese operetta: general survey on the development / the „silver age” of Viennese operetta – connection with the social and political reality; Franz Lehar: <i>Die lustige Witwe</i> (1905)</p> |
| <p>Friday, February 16, 2024 11:00 am – 1:00 pm</p> | <p>Exam</p> |