

Why “Models” Matters

Gordon Root

In outlining Schoenberg’s theoretical works, Alexander Goehr once condensed his discussion of *Models for Beginners in Composition* (hereafter *MBC*) into a single, terse statement: “In addition,” he wrote, “there is a short work, *Models for Beginners in Composition*.”¹ When compared with more substantial works such as *Theory of Harmony* (*TH*) (1978), *Fundamentals of Musical Composition* (*FMC*) (1967), and *Structural Functions of Harmony* (*SFH*) (1954), it is easy to see why Schoenberg’s diminutive syllabus might have failed to garner greater attention. One reason may have to do with the taciturn nature of the book itself: aside from a glossary of terms and a brief preface, *MBC* contains only seven pages of explanatory text (pp. 5-12).² As with any empirically based composition manual, a theoretical framework *implicitly* guides the structure and graded progression of these ‘practical’ models.³ Yet, only occasionally does this framework manage to rise explicitly to the surface.

In *MBC* Schoenberg discusses in condensed form, the essential characteristics of thematic types such as sentences and periods, and small part-forms including the minuet and scherzo. However, absent from these discussions are the slightly more philosophical musings of *FMC* such as the notion that the sentence should be considered a “higher form of construction than the period [because it] at once starts a kind of development,” or that the “special type of *modulatory contrasting middle section*” in the scherzo comes closer than that of the minuet to approaching “the elaboration (*Durchführung*) of the Sonata Allegro.”⁴ More than mere observations, these claims not only elevate the sentence and scherzo to the top of their respective classes, but they also incorporate a kind of barebones aesthetics, one that prioritizes development even in expository formal spaces. To be sure, this prioritization is illustrated *by way of example* throughout *MBC*. Yet, any explanation of Schoenberg’s most iconic concept, developing variation, remains conspicuously absent from its pages. Thus, developing variation, the method by which slight developments gradually lead to increasingly distant motive forms, is only *tacitly* present in Schoenberg’s syllabus even as it subliminally guides the logic of the many themes, middle sections, conclusions and alternative endings that comprise the bulk of the book’s content.⁵

1 Alexander Goehr, “The Theoretical Writings of Arnold Schoenberg,” *Perspectives of New Music* 13, no. 2 (Spring-Summer 1975): 3–16.

2 Arnold Schoenberg, *Models for Beginners in Composition: Syllabus, Musical Examples, and Glossary*, Revised Edition with Corrections, ed. Leonard Stein (Los Angeles: Belmont Music Publishers, 1972), 5–12. See also Arnold Schoenberg, *Models for Beginners in Composition*, ed. Gordon Root (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

3 The distinction between practical and speculative music theory is an old and familiar one. See for example Robert Wason’s discussion of this topic in “*Musica practica: music as pedagogy*,” in *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, ed. Thomas Christensen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 46–77. Despite this typical division, Dahlhaus once cautioned that even the most empirical compositional manuals must be based on implicit theories. See Thomas Christensen’s review of Dahlhaus’s *Die Musiktheorie im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert: Grundzüge einer Systematik*, in *Music Theory Spectrum* 10 (Spring 1988): 133.

4 Arnold Schoenberg, *Fundamentals of Musical Composition* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), 58, 151.

5 In *Coherence, Counterpoint, Instrumentation, Instruction in Form* (hereafter *ZKIF*) (1917) Schoenberg describes two types of variation: one that merely ornaments a motive, and another that allows “new ideas to arise.” “This second method,” he explains, “can be termed *developing variation*.” See Arnold Schoenberg, *Coherence, Counterpoint, Instrumentation, Instruction in Form*, trans. and eds. Charlotte M. Cross and Severine Neff (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press), 39. See also Arnold Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea and the Logic, Technique, and Art of Its Presentation*, eds. and trans. Patricia Carpenter and Severine Neff (Bloomington and Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 2006), 113, 167, 247.

There are two possible reasons for this lack of theoretical explanation in *MBC*. One centers around the original context of *MBC* as a course syllabus for *Beginning Composition 105a* at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Perhaps through course lectures, pre-requisites, and simultaneous enrollment in Schoenberg’s other classes, students in *Beginning Composition* were expected to attain this explanatory content in places other than the ‘liner notes’ of *MBC*. Here, the point was to learn through doing. The other reason might be described as a concern for accessibility: there are many examples of Schoenberg’s attempt to connect with a larger American audience during the late 1930s and 40s. As Sabine Feisst has noted, this was seldom done in an opportunistic or “facile manner,” and even works that veer in this direction continue to demonstrate the same principles of coherence and comprehensibility that Schoenberg viewed as part and parcel of the Classical tradition.⁶ Nevertheless, can *MBC* and its streamlined compositional method be read as part of this larger effort? Might its lack of explanation on certain points be interpreted as a conscious attempt at concision and accessibility? Each of these aspects – *MBC*’s unique function as a course syllabus, and its possible status as one of several artifacts demonstrating Schoenberg’s attempt to reach a broad American audience – are part of why ‘Models’ matters.

The following essay is divided into three sections, each of which offers a unique argument for why ‘Models’ matters in any attempt to understand Schoenberg’s oeuvre. In Section I, I explore the crucial role that *MBC* plays in forming a complete picture of Schoenberg’s theories on music. In Section II, I examine *MBC*’s special ability to provide a glimpse into Schoenberg’s classroom teaching. And in Section III, I make the case for *MBC* as one of several of Schoenberg’s attempts in the 1940s to simplify the presentation of his material, to streamline his thoughts in an effort to more directly connect with American audiences.

I. *MBC* as an Integral Part of Schoenberg’s Theories on Music

In a letter to President of Schirmer, Carl Engel, dated June 6, 1934, Schoenberg described his manuscript “The Musical Idea and its Presentation,” as the “so-called key-book” (*das sogenannte Schlüsselbuch*) for a comprehensive *Kompositionslehre*.⁷ Schoenberg estimated that this book, which “should establish the fundamental propositions for the entire theory,” could be finished in eight months. Of course, we now know that Schoenberg’s book was destined to remain incomplete, published only posthumously in rough manuscript-form. However, the idea of a comprehensive *Kompositionslehre* was one to which Schoenberg would return throughout his life, and one that he had imagined in various guises much earlier than 1934.

In 1911, Schoenberg had proposed a similar concept to Emil Hertzka, Director of Universal Edition, describing a “comprehensive...*Aesthetic of Music*” containing several interrelated “teaching aids” including books on form, instrumentation, and counterpoint.⁸ Seventeen years later, in 1929, he once again outlined a “unified... *Kompositionslehre*” very much along the lines of the one he had proposed to Engel.⁹ And again in 1932, he described this plan to Edgar Prinzhorn, explaining that “for nearly twenty years,” he had “been collecting material, ideas and sketches for an all-inclusive textbook of composition.”¹⁰

6 Among the works in which Feisst hears a simultaneous concern for tradition and “the tastes of American audiences” are Schoenberg’s arrangement of Brahms’s *Piano Quartet in G minor*, Op. 25, *Variations on a Recitative for Organ*, Op. 40, *Suite in G for String Orchestra*, and *Theme and Variations for Wind Band*, Op. 43a. See Sabine Feisst, *Schoenberg’s New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 99–153.

7 Feisst, *Schoenberg’s New World*, 186. Carl Engel was President of Schirmer from 1929 until his death in 1944.

8 An excerpt (emphasis in original) of Schoenberg’s letter to Hertzka is contained in Severine Neff’s introduction to *ZKIF*, xxiii. See also Bryan Simms, “Review of *Theory of Harmony* by Arnold Schoenberg,” trans. Roy E. Carter, *Music Theory Spectrum* 4 (1982): 156–57. Schoenberg’s original letter to Hertzka dated July 23, 1911 can be accessed at https://archive.schoenberg.at/letters/letters.php?action=view&id_letters=6698.

9 See Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea*, 301.

Ultimately, it may be impossible to pin down precisely the reason for Schoenberg's inability to complete his *Kompositionslehre* in 1911, 1929, or in 1932. Perhaps his itinerant teaching engagements from 1911–1934 worked against the concentrated effort necessary to truly undertake such an enormous project. From 1910–1911, he taught at the Vienna Academy for Music and Art; from 1911–1914, at The Stern Conservatory in Berlin; from 1915–1917, at the Schwarzwald School in Vienna, after which he was called to report for military service; from 1920–1921 at The Mahler Academy in Amsterdam and 1925–1933 at The Academy of Arts in Berlin. Finally, in 1933–1934 Schoenberg uprooted his family to move to the United States and escape Nazi Germany. Although Schoenberg wrote several of his most famous essays during this period, such turbulence would seem to offer challenges that could work against the completion of a unified *Kompositionslehre* on the grand scope that he describes in his correspondences.

There is also the simple explanation that Schoenberg offers in *MBC* as to why he was able to devote only a limited amount of time and energy to his theoretical writings: he was first and foremost, a composer. When describing the circumstances in which he completed *MBC*, Schoenberg quips “Though the first version was done in a great hurry and at a time when I was occupied with other affairs (composing, for instance, which is not a mere avocation of mine).”¹¹ What was true of *MBC* might also have been true of the *Kompositionslehre* as a whole. Simply put: it may not have been Schoenberg's first priority.

Finally, there is one tangible reason for which we have an abundance of evidence, and this is the one I outline below. Schoenberg never completed his *Formhenlehre* because he ended up using bits and pieces of this material for the individual books that we now know as *MBC*, *FMC*, and *SFH*.

Schoenberg's description of a unified *Kompositionslehre* encompassing “the four separate disciplines” of counterpoint, instrumentation, form, and harmony, through a “unified presentation” of material encapsulates the integrative spirit of his unique pedagogical approach during the 1930s and 40s at UCLA.¹² For, when teaching these courses, he tended to treat them as interconnected subjects. From *Beginning Counterpoint 14A* to *Form and Analysis 104*, *Composition 105*, and *Structural Functions of Harmony 106*, surviving class notes show such a frequent intersection of topics among these courses that it is sometimes difficult to determine where one course ends and another begins.

One such intersection, between *Structural Functions of Harmony 106* and *Beginning Composition 105*, is found in the shared emphasis of harmony and its articulative formal functions.¹³ In his unpublished 1936 essay “The Constructive Function of Harmony,” Schoenberg described this articulative role, outlining several basic harmonic “dispositions” ranging from a “stably formed,” or “establishing” function, to a “loosely formed,” or “transitional” one.¹⁴ Although such functions were not always described explicitly in *Beginning Composition*, they nonetheless silently guided the presentation of pedagogical material. Thus, when the simple two-measure phrases based on

10 Josef Rufer, *The Works of Arnold Schoenberg: A Catalogue of His Compositions, Writings and Paintings* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), 140. For the original letter, see https://archive.schoenberg.at/letters/letters.php?action=view&id_letters=2165.

11 Schoenberg, *Models for Beginners in Composition*, 2016, 53.

12 Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea*, 301.

13 In his essay “The Constructive Function of Harmony,” Schoenberg describes the five basic formal Functions articulated through harmony: “introductory, establishing, transitional, connecting, closing (concluding). See Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea*, 210.

14 Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea*, 210. Schoenberg's description of harmony's capacity to articulate formal function is given below:

Primarily, by means of its *articulating function*. Through its capacity to form closes of the most diverse kinds, degrees, and meanings, and of different consequence, harmony mainly produces clear boundaries, delimitations. Through its disposition to either “stand” or “move” it distinguishes “stably formed” characters from “loosely (free) formed” ones, types that are *introductory, establishing, transitional, connecting, closing* (concluding).

‘broken chord forms’ were later used to generate the themes of minuets and scherzos, an ‘establishing’ function was ensured.

In *Structural Functions of Harmony 106* students similarly learned to associate certain kinds of harmonic progressions with specific formal functions.¹⁵ For example, in the elaboration sections of scherzos, they learned to expect unstable, sequential passages, often culminating in retransitional progressions that ‘stood,’ or ‘dwelled’ on the dominant to prepare for the recapitulation—progressions they would put to similar use in their own school-compositions.¹⁶ In *SFH*, the book derived from Schoenberg’s harmony course of the same name, the articulation of formal functions through harmony was eventually reworked as “Progressions for Various Compositional Purposes.” Although Schoenberg omits any broad discussion of harmony as an articulating force in *MBC*, it is telling that when he does so in *SFH*, he refers readers to his syllabus:

The forms for which harmony progressions are recommended in the following chapter are described in Arnold Schoenberg: *Models for Beginners in Composition* (G. Schirmer, N.Y.). Thus all the advice given here refers to the school-forms constructed for the sake of practice. A school-form is an abstraction which differs, often considerably, from reality. For this reason these studies must be complemented by analysis of masterworks. The progressions recommended here will provide for the following forms or formal requirements: sentence, period, codetta, contrasting middle section, transition, sequence, *Durchführung* (elaboration or development), introduction and other so-called “free” forms.¹⁷

To be sure, *MBC* features many of the individual elements necessary for a theory of formal functions, including a substantial demonstration of Harmonic Schemes for Contrasting Middle Sections, advice on how carry out a recapitulation, a terse explanation of the function of a codetta, and even a serviceable guide on how to compose the elaboration section of a scherzo. However, like developing variation and other speculative topics, the binding, philosophical foundation of this theory remains only implicit in *MBC*, so that an explanation of its conceptual framework must be sought elsewhere. At the same time, many of “the forms for which harmon[ic] progressions are recommended” and their descriptions remain absent from *SFH*, leaving the reader to pursue more thorough and effective demonstrations in *MBC*. It would be an exaggeration, but only a slight one, to suggest that if you wanted to understand the conceptual framework of *x*, you would look in *SFH*, but if you really wanted to know *how to do x*, you would look in *MBC*. Particularly glaring is the omission of sentences from *SFH*. Perhaps like the students in Schoenberg’s *Structural Functions of Harmony* and *Beginning Composition* courses, readers gain a relatively complete picture of “Progressions for Various Compositional Purposes” (Ch. XI) only by reading both *MBC* and *SFH*.¹⁸ On this one point at least, the two books are truly inseparable. Both are necessary to form a complete picture of Schoenberg’s thoughts on the topic.

In this sense, *MBC* and *SFH* exemplify the extent to which Schoenberg’s holistic *Kompositionslehre* now survives only as a series of fragmented, independently published texts. The first stage of separation came in the summer of 1942, with the self-publication of *MBC*.¹⁹ As Schoen-

15 Schoenberg discusses the idea that harmony articulates formal function in “The Constructive Function of Harmony.” Arnold Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea*, 207–225.

16 Schoenberg’s seems to have preferred the term “dwelling” on the dominant, rather than “standing” on the dominant, though he uses the latter term at least once in *FMC* (153): “As soon as the upbeat harmony is reached, further modulation or remodulation becomes unnecessary, as in Op. 26, where the shortened segment already stands on the upbeat harmony.” Here Schoenberg uses the term “upbeat harmony,” a descriptive substitution for “dominant,” one he often used in his courses, and also in *MBC*. The upbeat need not always be the dominant of the home key, but it may be an artificial dominant of VI (i.e. *III*)(*MBC*, 10).

17 Arnold Schoenberg, *Structural Functions of Harmony* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1954), 114.

18 Schoenberg, *Structural Functions of Harmony*, 114–191.

19 *MBC* was initially published independently in the summer of 1942 by Schoenberg and sold through the UCLA bookstore as a syllabus for *Beginning Composition 105A*. It was then expanded to include an explanatory text, glossary, and numerous new exercises, and published by Schirmer the following year. For a publication history of this text see Arnold Schoenberg, *MBC*, 2016, 1–48.

berg later explained in a 1945 letter to Schirmer's new head editor, William Schuman, *MBC* came into existence as a "condensed" version of what later became *FMC*, in order to serve the needs for *Beginning Composition 105A*.²⁰ Next came the removal of all harmonic instruction from *FMC* in order to create *SFH* in 1946 (published posthumously in 1954) – a text that Schoenberg had originally proposed be sold together with *FMC*. Due to Schoenberg's disintegrating relationship with Schirmer following Engel's death, this plan never materialized. Thus, *MBC* remained the sole American textbook published during Schoenberg's lifetime – and the only one that emphasized model composition above analysis.

Of the three most closely related works, *SFH*, *FMC*, and *MBC*, the last may seem least significant, since its topics are extensively discussed within the other two books. Considering the relative thoroughness of *FMC*, it would be tempting to dismiss *MBC* as the less sophisticated sibling of the former. However, for several reasons, such a dismissal would be unfortunate. First, at a few crucial junctures, *MBC* contains important material that *FMC* lacks. This is true of its inclusion of harmonic analysis – analysis that *FMC* nearly altogether omits. Although harmonic analysis in *MBC* is admittedly sporadic, it is present enough to illustrate the various kinds of progressions 'for compositional purposes' that were so crucial for the delineation of formal structure discussed above.

MBC also fills a critical lack in the content of *FMC* through its more consistent inclusion of illustrative compositional examples. In *FMC*, the basic method seems to have been to illustrate each concept through excerpts from the literature, and to further reinforce this material through composition. This format seems to say three things to the student: 1. This is how it has been done, 2. This is how it might be done, and 3. Now try it yourself. As the book progresses beyond the opening chapters, there are a number of omissions regarding the middle step in this implied process. As a result, despite the claims of its title, the book tends to gradually emphasize tradition above compositional possibility and in this sense, it becomes more *Formenlehre* than *Kompositionslehre*.²¹

In fact, at several points *FMC* lacks altogether the kinds of originally composed demonstrations that one might expect from a composition text. This is true of the exploration of periodic themes in chapters VI and VII, neither of which contains a single original composition, and it is also true of the chapter on minuets (Ch. XV).²² In contrast, each concept in *MBC* – though noticeably lacking in verbal explanation – is consistently demonstrated through the extensive use of originally composed examples, each one often replete with a dizzying array of reimagined endings and re-compositions. Both books are clearly intended as composition manuals, for Schoenberg had little interest in analysis for analysis' sake.²³ And just as *SFH* and *MBC* are both needed for a full understanding of the constructive functions of harmony, ultimately *MBC* and *FMC* are necessary for a full understanding of Schoenberg's pedagogy of composition. However, *MBC*

20 Letter from Schoenberg to Schuman, December 5, 1945, https://archive.schoenberg.at/letters/letters.php?action=view&id_letters=4070. William Schuman was of course a composer in his own right, and one particularly well respected for his symphonic works.

21 The *Formenlehre* as distinct from the *Kompositionslehre* emerged during the nineteenth-century, spurred to some degree by a concern for the inner-workings of sonata form in the writings of Anton Reicha and A.B. Marx. By the time Riemann wrote his multi-volume analyses of Beethoven sonatas in 1905, the distinction was clear. See Scott Burnham, "Form" in *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, ed. Thomas Christensen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 880–908.

22 *Models for Beginners in Composition*, vii–viii. Since they do not form part of the lessons of *MBC* proper, I have omitted chapter IX and the Glossary from *MBC*'s topics in Example 1. Ch. IX offers extra material, openings of minuets and scherzos for students to use in creating their own small ternary forms and the Glossary of course comprises a list of definitions.

23 As Schoenberg put it in his 1949 essay "My Evolution," he was always "more composer than theorist." Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, 91. For a discussion of Schoenberg's "practical...emphasis on instinct" rather than on an attempt to erect a self-contained theoretical system, see Michael Musgrave, "Schoenberg and Theory," *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute*, 4, no. 1 (June 1980): 34–40.

clearly emphasizes invention and compositional exploration above analysis. Whereas a moderate degree of reorganization and expansion might transform *FMC* into a *Formenlehre*, the same cannot be said of *MBC*. This emphasis of compositional exploration relates directly to *MBC*’s function as a course syllabus for *Beginning Composition 105*. Ultimately, the insight that *MBC* provides into the material and mode of presentation in Schoenberg’s composition course may end up offering the most compelling rationale for its enduring value.

II. *MBC* as a Window into Schoenberg’s Classroom Teaching

One reason that ‘Models’ matters is that it, perhaps more than any other of Schoenberg’s works, mirrors his classroom teaching, particularly that of his beginning composition class at UCLA. It is thus able to provide a unique glimpse into the classroom pedagogy of one of the most historically relevant and influential composers of the twentieth century.

In the broadest sense, the published edition of *MBC* is a practical composition manual covering harmony, motivic variation, thematic design, and form. Each topic relies on the two-measure phrase as a vehicle for communicating its major principles and also for binding the topics together to form a cohesive theory. Example 1 shows the chapters I–IX of *MBC* and how they align with this overarching four-part structure.

Example 1. Overarching four-part topical design and its alignment with the chapters in *MBC*.

I.	Coordination of Melody and Harmony	Harmony
II.	Motive and Motival Features in Two-Measure Phrases	Motivic Structure
III.	Sentences	Thematic Design
IV.	Periods	
V.	Contrasting Middle Sections	Form
VI.	Recapitulation (a’)	
VII.	Minuet	
VIII.	Scherzo	

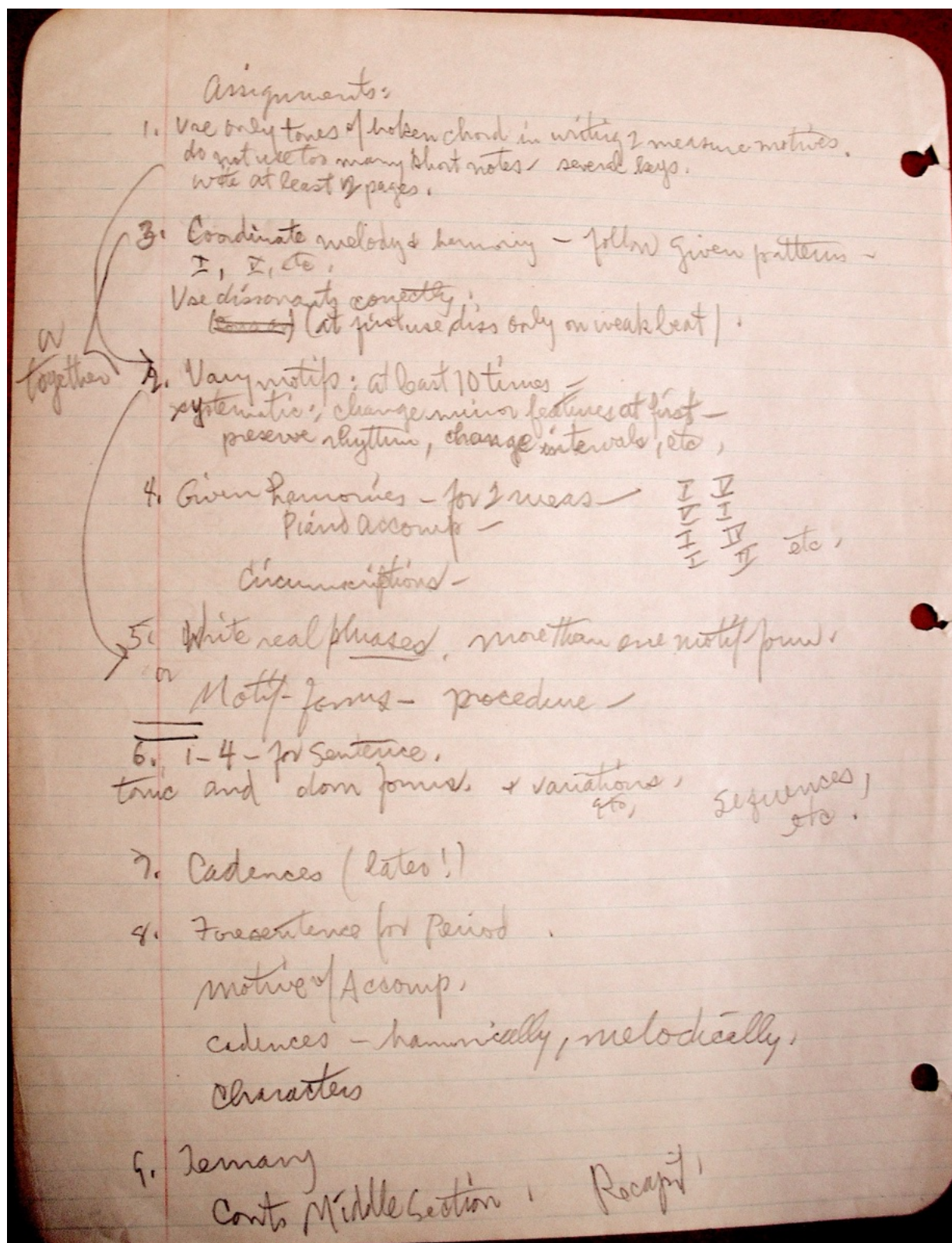
As Schoenberg notes in the preface to the 1943 edition of *MBC*, the syllabus “helped his students to such an extent that even those with little creative ability and musicianship could write a small minuet or even a scherzo that was not quite impossible.”²⁴ As I will explain, *MBC* works on several levels, but it is this practical goal of composing a small ternary form that guides the chronology of topics in *MBC*. Viewed from this angle, students learn to work with two measure motives so that they can write the openings of sentences and periods. They create sentences and periods so they can compose the theme of a small ternary form, and so on. The mastery of each task leads the student one step closer to what teachers today might describe as the completion of a capstone project: the composition of the small ternary form.

Of the many pages of material related to *MBC* found in the Leonard Stein Collection at the Arnold Schönberg Center in Vienna, Austria, it is perhaps the student assignments from *Beginning Composition 105a* that offer the clearest window into the way this material functioned in Schoenberg’s composition class. Among these papers, in a folder labeled as “musical examples” intended for “models for beginners in composition,” there are several pages listing student assignments chronologically for a portion of the various semesters the course was offered. Example 2 shows one such list found among the papers of Leonard Stein, who was Schoenberg’s teaching assistant for *Beginning Composition 105* during the years that he was creating the material destined to become *MBC* in the late 1930s early 1940s.

²⁴ Schoenberg, *Models for Beginners in Composition*, 2016, 53.

sure phrases on *two* and then three or more harmonies, each time, following the same procedure of starting with only chord tones, and gradually introducing ornaments. Next, students complete assignments related to motives and motivic features. In this second round of motivic assignments students are expected to learn to repeat and vary motive forms through inversion and transposition. In this way, they are actually writing what Schoenberg at this time described as the “fore-sentence,” or the basic idea. Example 3 shows a handwritten list of assignments, undated, and separate from the one in Example 2. Here, we see that after “Motive forms” in #5, students indeed continue on to the foresentences of themes.

Example 3. Facsimile 2. Student Assignments from 105A, late 1930s or early 1940s. (Leonard Stein Collection, "models for beginners in composition," Folder 1, labeled "musical examples," courtesy Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna).



Students, then practice bringing their sentences to a conclusion—this I believe is what is meant by the rather cryptic note “cadences” in #7. This entire process is then replicated and applied to the period, so that students practice writing the foresentences for periods, then

bringing these to conclusion just as they did for sentences. Once they complete these thematic assignments, which also include learning to incorporate accompaniment patterns, or “motives of accompaniment,” students have acquired a rudimentary grounding in the construction of themes.²⁵ As the penultimate task for *Beginning Composition*, students write the contrasting middle sections of small ternary forms. And finally, shown to the right of #9, students work on recaptulations.

Papers from *Beginning Composition 105a* in the summer of 1942 – the course to which Schoenberg obliquely refers in his 1943 preface as the *immediate* source of *MBC* – indicate that students submitted a two-part final exam.²⁶ This included: a minuet, a scherzo and several themes with alternative endings. Handwritten notes from the students indicate that the assignments were submitted to Leonard Stein, though many corrections to student work seem to be in Schoenberg’s hand. One such note, on the final minuet of Jeane Lichty dated August 6, 1942 reads, “Mr. Stein, This is very bad, but it is all I had time to do on such short notice.”²⁷ Lichty’s explanatory gesture, the wording of her note – indicating she was given “notice,” or more precisely, a due date by which the work was to be completed – and the uniform dates on all assignments, indicate that these themes and small ternary forms were part of a take-home project with a two-part due-date of August 4 and August 6, 1942. Specifically, thematic exercises were due on day one, and small ternary forms on day two.

Examples 4a and 4b show the final Scherzo of Schoenberg’s student, Bob DiVall. One wonders if this is the same Robert DiVall, who went on to become the principal trumpeter of the LA Philharmonic Orchestra from 1951–1982.²⁸ DiVall’s Scherzo is very much a student work, but a competent one, and it is easy to see why he earned an A for his efforts. In the sense that DiVall’s piece uses the two-measure phrase to structure each part of the scherzo, and that each formal section remains clearly delineated and effective in its presentation, DiVall demonstrates his understanding and facility with the material of the course.

25 Schoenberg had in fact taught a course called The Construction of Themes at USC from 1935–36, the notes for which can be found in the Strang Collection, Folder 51, at the Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna.

26 As Schoenberg explains it, the published version of *MBC* was the “enlarged version of a syllabus which [he] prepared for beginners in composition in a summer session of six weeks at the University of California Los Angeles.” (*MBC*, 53). Just two days after students had submitted the final project for *Beginning Composition 105a*, on Saturday, August 8, 1942, Schoenberg mailed his syllabus to Engel at Schirmer to solicit publication. See https://archive.schoenberg.at/letters/letters.php?action=view&id_letters=3736. The 1942 summer course may have been the immediate source of the syllabus, but as Leonard Stein explains in the 1973 edition of *MBC*, this material was created over several years of teaching *Beginning Composition* (*MBC*, 1973, 3).

27 Lichty’s minuet with her note was found in Leonard Stein Collection, UCLA Notes, Folders 103–117, folder 115.

28 Page 302 of the 1942 UCLA Yearbook shows a young Robert DiVall holding a trumpet and standing in the second row of the Bruin Band See: <https://archive.org/details/southern-campus-1942-univ/page/302/mode/2up?q=divall> (accessed July 21, 2023). This 1971 advertisement for the Bengel Trumpet Company shows Robert DiVall, trumpeter of the LA Philharmonic standing next to fellow trumpeters Irving Bush, Tom Stevens, and Mario Guarneri: <https://www.hnwhite.com/King/Benge%20Instruments/1971%20Benge%20Page%2026%20Large.jpg> (accessed July 21, 2023). According to Michele Beacham, Archives Manager of the LA Philharmonic, the archives contain no official records regarding Robert DiVall’s education before coming to the LA Phil. However, all evidence supports the idea that Bob DiVall in Schoenberg’s 1942 *Beginning Composition* class, Robert DiVall, trumpeter in the 1942 Bruin Band, and Robert DiVall, trumpeter in the LA Phil are one and the same. Thank you to for the help of Jet Jacobs and Maxwell Zupke from UCLA Library Special Collections and to Michele Beacham, Archives Manager of the LA Philharmonic Archives.

Example 4a. Facsimile 3. Scherzo by Bob DiVall, recto (Leonard Stein UCLA Notes, box 5 of 6, Leonard Stein Collection, courtesy Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna).

Bob DiVall
Music 105A
August 6, 1942

SCHERZO

good

better aff

(OVER)

Example 4b. Facsimile 3. Scherzo by Bob DiVall, verso (Leonard Stein UCLA Notes, box 5 of 6, Leonard Stein Collection, courtesy Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna).



DiVall does mostly what we would expect a student to do in a scherzo for Schoenberg’s beginning composition course. He begins with a theme based on the two-measure phrase, in this case a period (mm. 1–16). He follows this with a contrasting middle section based on a modulatory sequence (mm. 17–24) and a retransition that culminates by ‘dwelling’ on the dominant (mm. 25–32 and mm. 32–40). DiVall then composes only the opening measure of a recapitulation. Since

recapitulations seem to have been such an integral concept in *MBC*, the fragmentary nature of this last portion is somewhat puzzling. However, since the other student submissions feature similar incomplete recapitulations, this seems to have been baked into the instructions for the final assignment, perhaps a concession imposed by the limited time constraints of the summer course. Despite certain irregularities in DiVall's small ternary form, for example the complete stoppage of motion at the antecedent cadence (which Schoenberg corrects in blue pencil), or the retrogressive harmonic movement of the opening period, which first features a cadence in the dominant before following this with a tonic cadence in the consequent, DiVall's piece earns high marks.²⁹ Given the simple requirements of the course, it seems that DiVall has completed an admirable final project – he has quite literally, put all of the pieces together.

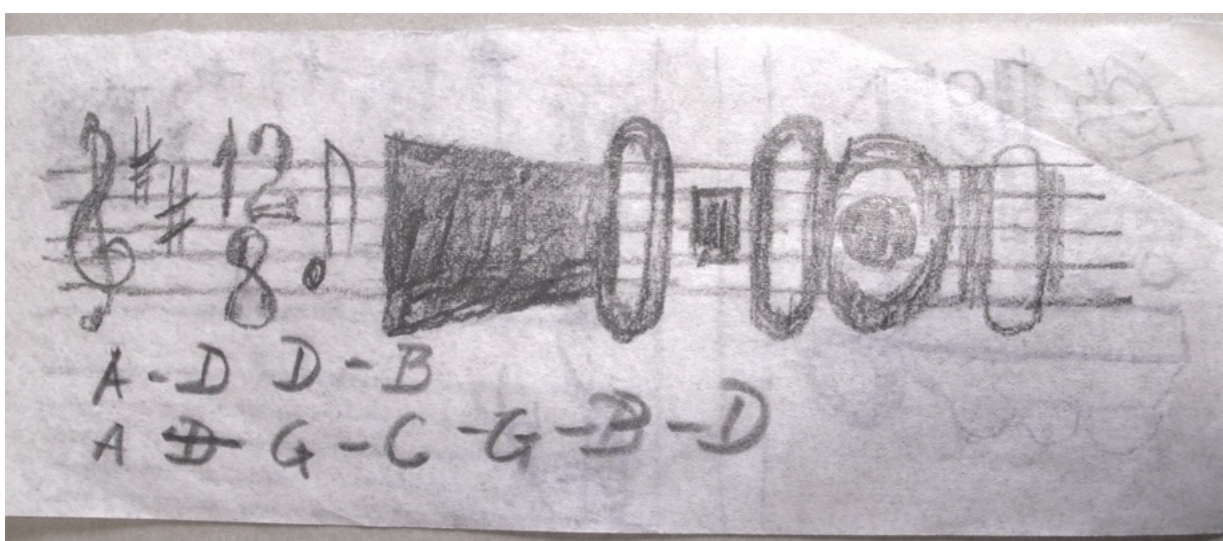
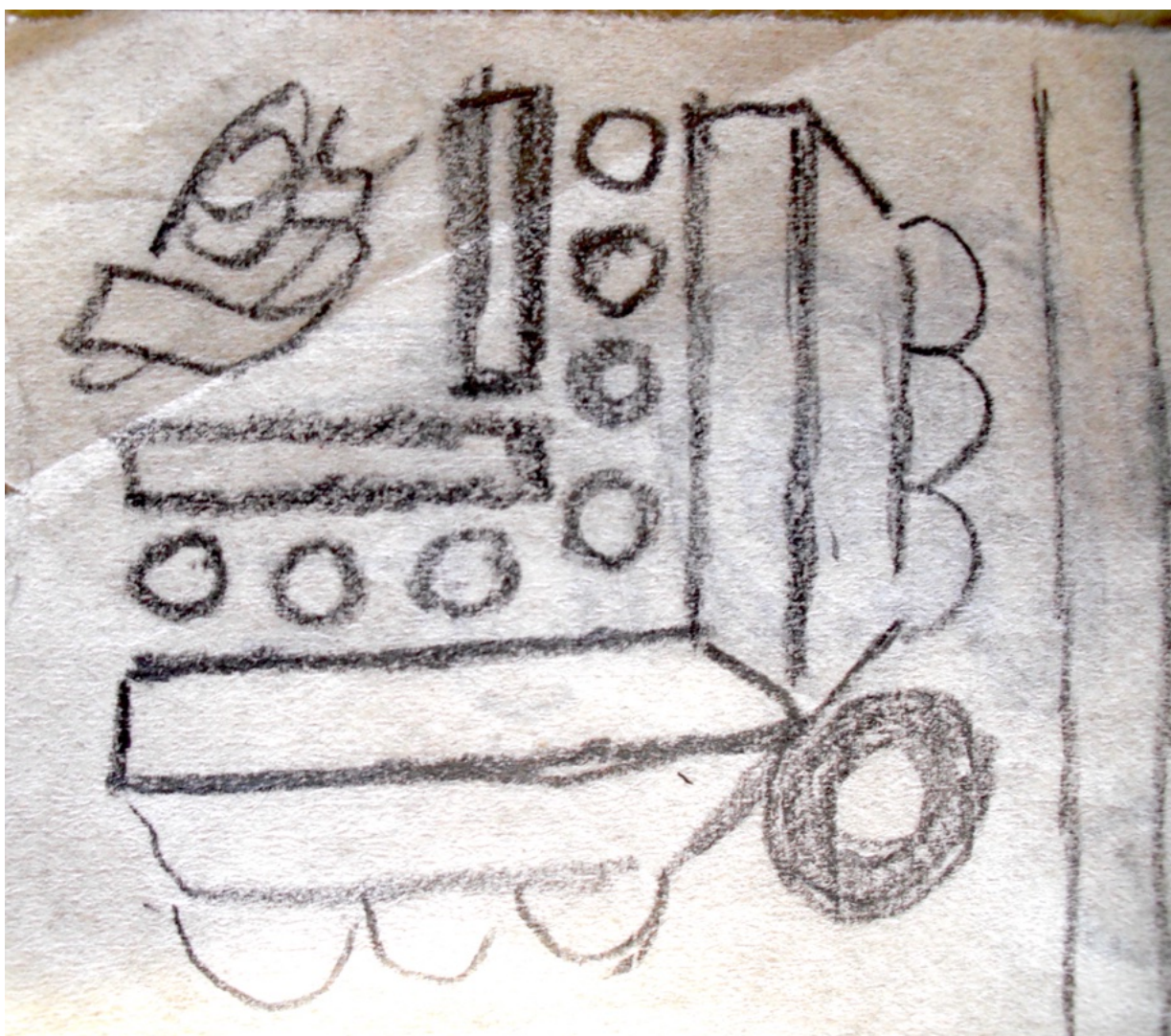
DiVall's scherzo reads as a roadmap of the content and chronology of *MBC*, his little two-measure phrases providing the perfect bridge between Schoenberg's syllabus and his beginning composition course. Crucial to the way in which Schoenberg's topics seem to lead so seamlessly from one to the next when teaching *Beginning Composition* is this emphasis on the two-measure phrase. As the title of *MBC* suggests, Schoenberg's goal was to provide guides for motivic development, thematic structure, harmonic design, and form, simple *models* which students could imitate in their school compositions. In this way, the laconic text of *MBC* would lead by way of example, thus encouraging students to learn through imitation and doing rather than by reading. As Schoenberg put it when proposing his syllabus to Carl Engel on August 8, 1942, "I used to ask students: 'If you wanted to build an airplane, would you disregard what others have achieved before you?'"³⁰ In the context of Schoenberg's book, this may bring to mind the image of model airplanes, and indeed the idea of building larger units by fitting together smaller more manageable ones lies at the heart of *MBC*. By the 1940s, Schoenberg had adopted a modular approach to composition pedagogy, one that relied on the two-measure phrase to convey all basic aspects of composition from motivic structure to themes and even harmony to his young students.³¹ When we encounter the Lego-like drawings of Example 5 alongside drafts of *MBC*, it is not difficult to see in them a subconscious representation of the many interchangeable motives and "foresentences" in *MBC*, ideas that with only slight variation could be rearranged to create the opening sequences of contrasting middle sections or any other part within the whole.

29 In *MBC* Schoenberg occasionally writes periods that tonicize the dominant at the end of the antecedent, but where this is the case, he does not generally answer it with a consequent ending on the tonic. As in Period No. 4, Alternative Ending No. 1 (Ex. 231a), Schoenberg usually tonicizes a new region, in this case VI.

30 Letter from Schoenberg to Engel, August 8, 1942. https://archive.schoenberg.at/letters/letters.php?action=view&id_letters=3736.

31 In terms of topic and chronology, Schoenberg's pedagogical method remains consistent from Berg's composition lessons beginning in 1907 to his beginning composition course at UCLA in the 1940s. Even Berg's lessons had begun with motives and their harmonization and variation used to generate the themes of small part-forms. What most clearly distinguishes Schoenberg's pedagogy in the 1940s is his emphasis on the two-measure phrase rather than the one-measure motive or the four-measure phrase. This modular phrase approach, I argue, was the cornerstone of Schoenberg's new compositional method. See *MBC*, 2016, 1–48.

Example 5. Facsimiles 5 and 6. Schoenberg's Doodles. (Models for Beginners in Composition, TBK 5, folder 1, “musical examples,” courtesy Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna).



In Schoenberg's beginning composition course, the two-measure phrase functioned as precisely this kind of flexible building block capable of generating various thematic shapes, sequential patterns, and even brief codettas. Depending on how it was developed, this grouping could be used to compose either a sentence or a period as the opening theme of a school-composition. As Schoenberg describes it in *MBC*, the basic distinction hinged on the treatment of mm. 3–4. "The main difficulty in writing periods" he explains, "lies in the necessity of using in mm. 3–4 'more remote' motive forms."³² The "difficulty" here is a relative one, in comparison to mm. 3–4 of the sentence, which requires only "a repetition of mm. 1–2 accommodated to a contrasting harmony." Thus, mm. 3–4 of the sentence involves a procedure closer to repetition, while these same measures in the period necessitate something comparably more variable and unsystematic (in terms of motivic development)—what William Caplin has described as a contrasting idea.³³

Because mm. 3–4 comprise the main distinction between the opening four measures of sentences and periods, it is possible to use the same two-measure phrase to generate either thematic type. Example 6 compares the sentential and periodic realizations of Schoenberg's E minor two-measure phrase from *MBC*.

Example 6. Identical two-measure phrase used to generate a sentence and period in *MBC* (Examples 227 and 228).³⁴

227 Sentence No. 5

The musical score consists of two systems of piano accompaniment in E minor, 2/4 time. The first system, labeled '227 Sentence No. 5', contains measures 1 through 4. It features a two-measure phrase that is repeated four times, with each repetition numbered 1 through 4. The harmonic structure is indicated by Roman numerals: I, IV, VII, (V), and I₇. The second system, labeled '228 Period', contains measures 5 through 8. It features the same two-measure phrase repeated four times, numbered 5 through 8. The harmonic structure is indicated by Roman numerals: IV, V, and III. The score is written for piano with treble and bass staves.

³² Schoenberg, *Models for Beginners in Composition*, 2016, 7.

³³ William E. Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 49.

³⁴ Schoenberg, *Models for Beginners in Composition*, 2016, 31–32.

228 Period No. 1 (on same Model as Ex. 227)

In Example 6a, the initial two-measure phrase is transposed down by whole-step *à la* Beethoven’s *Waldstein Sonata* to create the ‘presentation phrase’ of a sentence.³⁵ In Example 6b the ascending fourth from the opening anacrusis functions as the basis of a ‘more remote’ motive form (b) to create the second two-measure grouping (Caplin’s c.i.) of an antecedent phrase ending with a half-cadence in m. 4.

There are certainly other factors distinguishing the sentential and periodic designs in Example 6. One is the lack of an adequate cadence in measure four of the sentence (Ex. 227), a harmonic arrival that would have been necessary for listeners to hear this as an antecedent phrase. By contrast, m. 4 of the period in Example 6 features a clear harmonic interruption followed by a re-initiation of the expository process in m. 5. This results in a parallel period – the only kind of period found in Schoenberg’s syllabus. Instead of a consequent phrase, m. 5 of the sentence in Example 6b initiates a continuation opening with a variation on the original two-measure phrase, one based on an inversion of the opening anacrusis (now a descending fourth instead of an ascending one). Perhaps the key ingredient to differentiating the sentence in Example 227 from the period in Example 228 is found in what Schoenberg describes in *MBC* as the “reduction” of the motive at the start of the continuation in m. 5 of the sentence—a phenomenon more commonly known today as ‘fragmentation.’ In Example 227, the start of the continuation (m. 5) features a reduction or fragmentation in contrapuntal imitation, resulting in groupings that are now closer together, and which therefore create the impression of a speeding up that is generally absent from the consequent of the period. In Example 227, as in most sentences, this culminates with a liquidation releasing “the obligations of previous motivic material, by gradually depriving the motive forms of their characteristic features and dissolving them into uncharacteristic forms” as the continuation leads to the cadence.³⁶

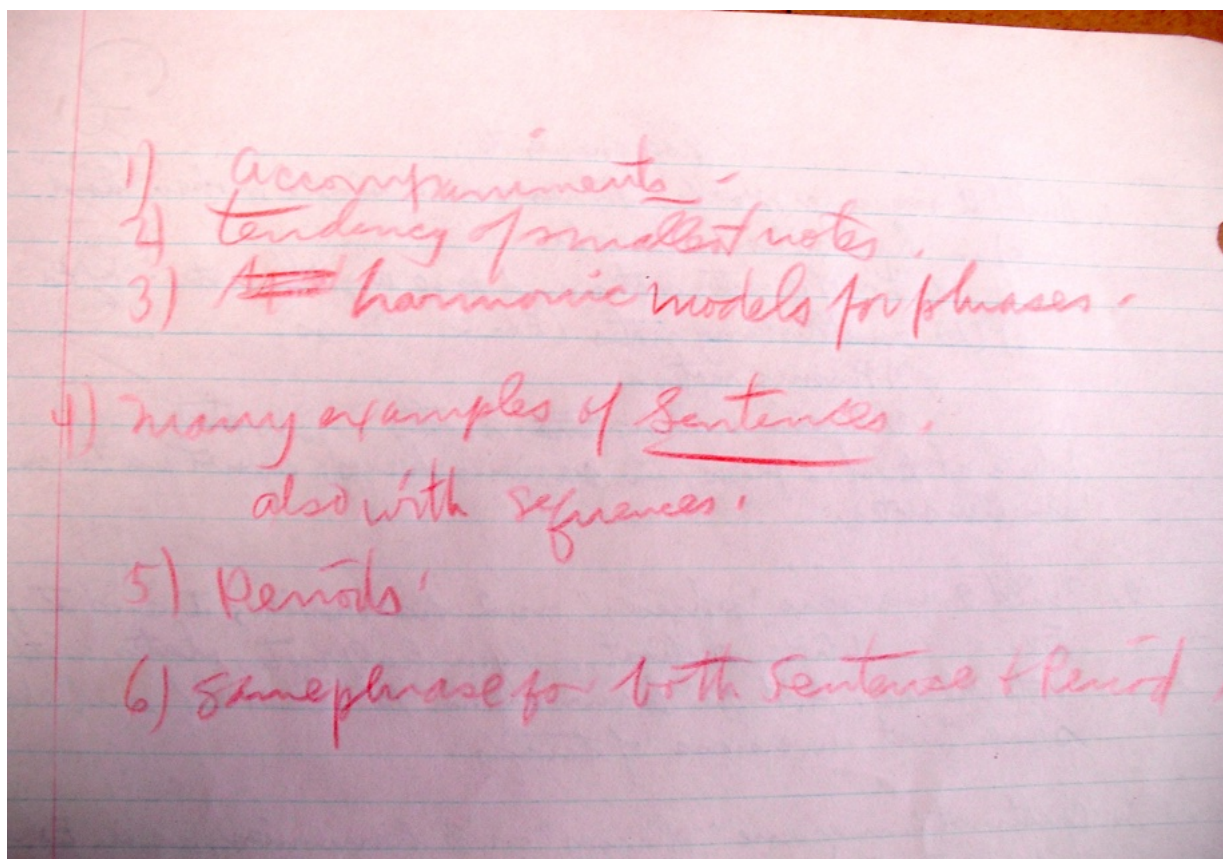
It is telling that this modular treatment of the two-measure phrase, with its potential to function as the foresentence of either a period or a sentence became the focus of an assignment in *Beginning Composition 105a*. The point of such an exercise is clearly *not* the foresentence itself, but rather what comes after it. In writing the same foresentence for both kinds of themes, stu-

35 Although Schoenberg describes the first four measures of the sentence as “present[ing]” its “basic motive,” he did not coin the term “presentation phrase” as a descriptor for this opening segment (*FMC*, 21). The term seems to have been introduced by William Caplin via the work of Erwin Ratz. See Caplin, *Classical Form*, 10.

36 Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea*, 53.

dents would be forced to carefully consider the difference between a period and sentence and in this way, they would learn by doing, that which *FMC* teaches us through analysis. Example 7 shows yet another list of assignments, undated, from Schoenberg's beginning composition class. In this list we read that students are to write "many examples of sentences" and periods, and they are to "use the same phrase for both sentences and periods."

Example 7. Facsimile 7. Student Assignments from 105A, late 1930s or early 1940s. (Leonard Stein Collection, "models for beginners in composition," folder 1, labeled "musical examples," courtesy Arnold Schönberg Center).



It is not only the themes in *MBC* that are based on the two-measure phrase. As Example 4 illustrates, even contrasting middle sections in *MBC* are composed of two-measure phrases. Here, the harmonies are complex, but the grouping remains recognizable as the same one used to construct the periods and sentences earlier in the text. In fact, these two-measure phrases, generally with the original motives intact, are intended to function as contrasting middle sections for the various themes given in Chapters III–IV (See Example 8).

Example 8. Contrasting middle section No. 8 from *MBC* (belongs with Sentence Example 227, reproduced here as Example 6).³⁷

240 No. 8 (to Sentence No. 5, 227, second ending)

When initially proposing *MBC* to Carl Engel on August 8, 1942, Schoenberg seemed excited about the potential for this catchy new method to reach a wide audience. Encouraged by its success as a syllabus for *Composition 105a*, he no doubt imagined similar results with a general readership. He explains:

Today I mailed to you a syllabus: “Models for Beginners in Composition.” I made this syllabus, because I was at first desperate to teach students, who have no special talent for composition, in six weeks matters which only the best could master in a regular semester of 16 weeks.³⁸

The attractiveness of Schoenberg’s method was its ability to render complex musical concepts, such as the ones in Example 6, accessible to students through palatable two-measure groupings.

This novel approach in many ways offers a glimpse into the way Schoenberg had *always* taught. The progression of topics in *MBC* bears a striking resemblance to that of Berg’s 1907–1911 lessons in free-composition some 30 years earlier. The exhaustive approach, the tireless exploration of motivic combinations, the overabundance of alternative passages and re-compositions – features also in evidence from *Theory in Harmony* to *Preliminary Exercises in Counterpoint*. These were features of Schoenberg’s teaching more generally; they were part and parcel of his pedagogical method.

This may seem in stark contrast to a book that I have been arguing represents Schoenberg’s attempt at simplicity. For now, I might seem to hedge when I say that *MBC can be simple* – if we want to read it that way. It can be as simple as the beginning textbook on composition that it purports to be, or it can be as complex and as inscrutable as the *Gedanke manuscripts*, *TH* or *ZKIF* at its most speculative. As John Cage described this very issue related Schoenberg’s teaching, it all depends on how deeply we dig. On one level *MBC* is a simple book, but it is perhaps not an entirely *open* one. In detailing John Cage’s studies with Schoenberg, Michael Hicks notes how puzzling Schoenberg’s exhaustive approach could be for some of Schoenberg’s students. Ironically, it may be Cage, a composer often portrayed as Schoenberg’s philosophical opposite, who most accurately grasped this approach. As Cage put it, the basic principle underlying Schoenberg’s endless strings of alternative endings and recompositions may not reside in the solutions themselves. Rather, the true answer may lie in the “*question that we ask.*”³⁹

³⁷ Schoenberg, *Models for Beginners in Composition*, 2016, 39.

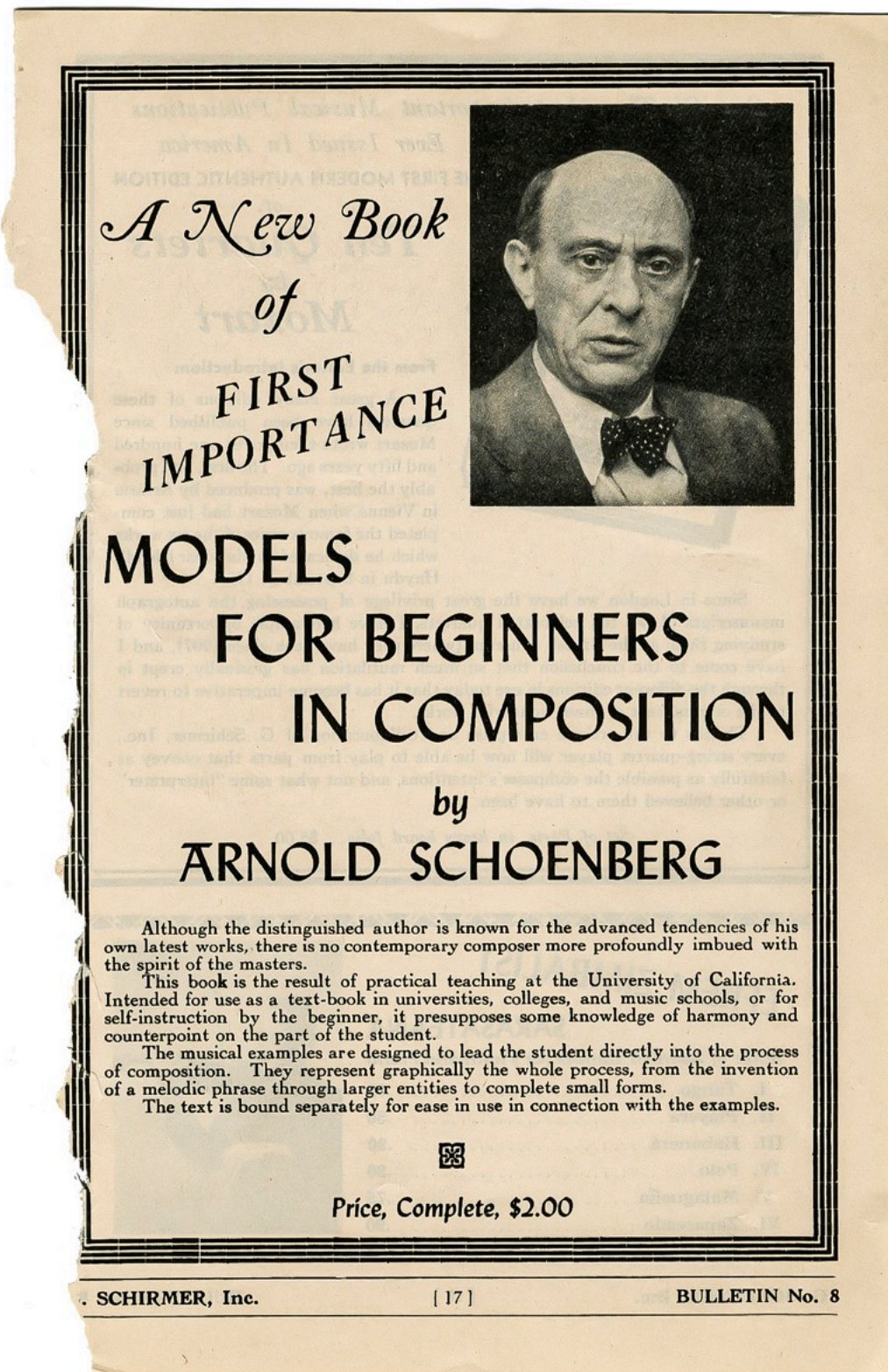
³⁸ Letter from Schoenberg to Engel, August 8, 1942. https://archive.schoenberg.at/letters/letters.php?action=view&id_letters=3736.

³⁹ Michael Hicks, “John Cage’s Studies with Schoenberg,” *American Music* 8, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 135.

III. MBC as Schoenberg's Attempt to Connect with American Audiences

MBC's streamlined compositional method evidently captured the imagination of Schirmer's marketing team. In ads for the book, shown in Example 9 they pitched Schoenberg's syllabus as a self-explanatory guide for beginners, one that "presupposed" only "some knowledge of harmony and counterpoint on the part of the student." The book is designed so simply, the ads claim, as to "lead the student directly into the process of composition." The whole endeavor, "from the invention of a melodic phrase, through larger entities," is "represent[ed] graphically." Just follow these simple diagrams, the ads seem to suggest, and you too will soon be composing like a European master. Add to this, the publicity photo of the fatherly, bow-tied composer, *almost* smiling above the title of his new book, and it all paints a portrait markedly different from the one typically expected from this "author known for the advanced tendencies of his works."

Example 9. Advertisement for *MBC*, from “Bulletin of New Music Published and Imported by G. Schirmer, New York,” Bulletin No. 8, 1943. Courtesy G. Schirmer.



A New Book
of
**FIRST
IMPORTANCE**



**MODELS
FOR BEGINNERS
IN COMPOSITION**

by
ARNOLD SCHOENBERG

Although the distinguished author is known for the advanced tendencies of his own latest works, there is no contemporary composer more profoundly imbued with the spirit of the masters.

This book is the result of practical teaching at the University of California. Intended for use as a text-book in universities, colleges, and music schools, or for self-instruction by the beginner, it presupposes some knowledge of harmony and counterpoint on the part of the student.

The musical examples are designed to lead the student directly into the process of composition. They represent graphically the whole process, from the invention of a melodic phrase through larger entities to complete small forms.

The text is bound separately for ease in use in connection with the examples.

☞

Price, Complete, \$2.00

SCHIRMER, Inc. [17] BULLETIN No. 8

To be sure, the school-compositions in *MBC* are more complex than they might initially seem. Harmonically, they are often quite adventurous, and as Example 6 demonstrates, Schoenberg makes little concession with regard to the methods of variation. An analysis of the complete school-compositions in *MBC* reveals sophisticated works employing many of Schoenberg’s well-

known compositional techniques. Just as Schoenberg demonstrates in his famous analysis of the theme to Beethoven's Op. 2, No. 3, the two-measure phrase in *MBC* often functions as the *Grundgestalt* in these brief school compositions by presenting "the destinies of the motive."⁴⁰ The way in which the "consequences" of the two-measure *Grundgestalt* are explored, how this leads to a state of "motion" and "unrest," and "how the forces again attain a state of rest" constitutes "the realization of the idea."⁴¹ This, Schoenberg says, is its presentation. This organic, encapsulating function of the two-measure phrase may have remained unknown to most readers of *MBC* even as it silently guides the logic of the school compositions within its pages. Thus, by way of example Schoenberg demonstrates a concern for the same principles of coherence that had guided more speculative works (such as the *Gedanke* manuscripts). As Schoenberg explains it, not all of the "technical problems" in *MBC* are "within reach of a beginner." However, "studying and analyzing the examples will make him acquainted with such procedures and might stimulate a future composer to write in a more dignified manner."⁴²

Due to its limited analytical commentary and dizzying array of examples, the degree of complexity in *MBC* is, to some extent, left up to the student. A student who wished to compose only the simplest minuets and scherzos *could* no doubt learn to do so quickly, as Schirmer's ad promises. Composing simple diatonic two-measure phrases, expanding these to create sentences and periods, adding a contrasting middle section using the rudimentary pedal points provided in the illustrative examples, and following this with an expedient recapitulatory phrase, would all seem to be well within the grasp of a young composer. Although "[E]ven a beginner who has not a considerable creative talent"⁴³ should be able to compose in this way after reading *MBC*, Schoenberg acknowledges that his method is unable to provide two central ingredients: imagination and inspiration. These, he explains, are the purview of genius:

There are 'irregularities' which are only accessible to a really great talent, a higher technique, and—perhaps—only to genius... What produces real music is solely and exclusively the inventive capacity, imagination, and inspiration of a creative mind—if and when a creator 'has something to express.'⁴⁴

Schoenberg's streamlined compositional method in *MBC*, focused on the modular use of the two-measure phrase, can be read as one of several examples of what Sabine Feisst describes as a "concern with the tastes of American Audiences" during the 1930s and early 1940s.⁴⁵ The late tonal works such as the *Suite in G* (1935), *Kol nidre* (1938), *Variations on a Recitative* (1941), and the *Theme and Variations for Wind Band*, Op. 43a (1943), all exemplify this tendency. So too does his 1938 proposal to Carl Engel for "The Student's Private Library," a collection of spiral bound study scores with accompanying records, "historical facts," and even "brief analyses"—a project that failed to progress beyond the outline of his letter.⁴⁶ Is it realistic to imagine annotated scores along the lines of the analyses in *FMC*, with annotations labeling the themes and forms of the recorded repertoire – a sort of hybrid between a pocket score and an introductory textbook on form? Further examples of Schoenberg's "concern for American tastes" and his general attempt to reach American audiences would include his many articles for programs, liner notes, his radio broadcasts such as the analysis of his *Variations for Orchestra*, Op. 31, and his many public lectures.⁴⁷

40 Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea*, 161.

41 Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea*, 161.

42 Schoenberg, *Models for Beginners in Composition*, 54.

43 Schoenberg, *Models for Beginners in Composition*, 54.

44 Schoenberg, *Models for Beginners in Composition*, 54.

45 Feisst, *Schoenberg's New World*, 71.

46 Letter from Schoenberg to Engel, December 12, 1938. https://archive.schoenberg.at/letters/letters.php?action=view&id_letters=3112.

47 See J. Daniel Jenkins, *Schoenberg's Program Notes and Musical Analyses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Of these examples, *Theme and Variations for Wind Band* and *MBC* come closest to being kindred works. It is telling that Schoenberg’s first proposes his work for band in the same August 8 1942 letter in which he introduces Carl Engel to *MBC*.⁴⁸ At this early stage, however, Schoenberg has no sketches for the piece that was to become Op. 43a, and is even considering arranging some of Schubert’s four hand piano compositions as his offering for band. One can imagine any of the *Military Marches*, D. 733, or the *Characteristic Marches*, D. 886, being a natural fit for this purpose.⁴⁹ Schoenberg’s simultaneous proposal of *MBC* and the somewhat nebulous band work, reveal a close bond between the two 1943 works. In the end, Op. 43a may have come into existence as a direct result of Schoenberg’s work on *MBC*. Both were written for a similar set of college-aged ‘performers,’ the former for band musicians, and the latter for composers. Indeed, Op. 43a seems to demonstrate as an artwork the material that *MBC* presents as pedagogical instruction. The theme of Op. 43a opens with a pair of two-measure phrases whose rhythmic structure – particularly the second one – might easily pass as a variation on the two-measure phrases of the E minor sentence in Example 6. The theme of Op. 43 is admittedly more complex than many of the themes in *MBC*, featuring as it does precisely the sorts of “irregularities” that Schoenberg deems accessible only to “only to genius” (Ex. 10).⁵⁰ In this sense, Schoenberg’s theme demonstrates how the materials of *MBC* might sound in the hands of one in possession of such a “higher technique.”

48 Letter from Schoenberg to Engel, August 8, 1942. https://archive.schoenberg.at/letters/letters.php?action=view&id_letters=3736.

49 For something closer to the character of Op. 43a, one could imagine Schoenberg the Fantasy, D. 9, or the Overture, D. 668.

50 Schoenberg, *Models for Beginners in Composition*, 4.

Example 10. Opening sentence of Op. 43a. Courtesy Belmont Music Publishers.

The musical score is divided into three systems of piano accompaniment. The first system (measures 1-4) shows a descending minor third (-m3) from B \flat to G and an ascending minor third (+m3) from F \sharp to A. The second system (measures 5-9) continues the harmonic development with various chords and textures. The third system (measures 7-9) shows further harmonic progression.

Chord symbols and annotations are as follows:

- Measure 1: T (Tonic), VI
- Measure 2: VI
- Measure 3: V
- Measure 4: H (Ger. 6), S/T I, H (Fr. 6)
- Measure 5: V
- Measure 6: H (Ger. 6), V
- Measure 7: I, M-SM II
- Measure 8: VI I, IV VI, VI I, II IV
- Measure 9: V

The sentence that opens Op. 43 begins not with a symmetrical tonic–dominant statement, but instead with a slightly asymmetrical arrangement of two-measure phrases with the second phrase as a variation of the first. As Example 6 illustrates the first two-measure phrase spans a descending minor third (B-flat, A-flat, G), while the second one answers this gesture with an *ascending* minor third (F-sharp, G, A) (filled in with a chromatic tetrachord). This inversive relationship is reminiscent of the theme to Brahms’s *Cello Sonata*, Op. 38, an example Schoenberg employs in *FMC* to illustrate sentences with tonic and dominant phrases that have been “replaced by a different kind of repetition” (see Ex. 11).⁵¹

51 Schoenberg, *Fundamentals in Musical Composition*, 60.

Example 11. Schoenberg’s analysis of the theme from Brahms’s *Cello Sonata*, Op. 38, *FMC* (Ex. 61a, 79). Courtesy Faber and Faber.

Allegro non troppo

Like Schoenberg’s theme, Brahms’s second two-measure phrase similarly inverts the structure of the first – here, a diatonic rather than a literal inversion (one that conforms to the scale rather than preserving the precise intervallic content). Whereas the initial two-measure phrase ends with a descending second (C–B), the two-measure phrase in mm. 3-4 answers this with an ascending second (C–D); this results in a contour inversion of the two phrases so that the first two-measure phrase spans an ascending fifth, the second, a descending third.⁵² Both themes follow the second two-measure phrase with a continuation leading to a cadence on the dominant (Schoenberg’s does so in the minor submediant region: Brahms’s, in the tonic).

Although the inversional design at the beginning of the sentential theme in Op. 43 may seem abstract, it is heard rhetorically as a simple dialectical construct—a sound that might be expressed in more traditional presentation phrases as a tonic–dominant succession or palindromically as I–V | V–I. In other words, we understand Schoenberg’s opening as a slightly modernized version of the same traditional gesture that launches Beethoven’s Op. 2, No. 3, Mozart’s Symphony No. 40, and countless other works—even if we are not initially aware of the underlying mechanism that makes this aural association possible. Schoenberg’s theme is thus in recognizable dialog with tradition, and more particularly with the music of Brahms in its motivic language.

Schoenberg’s syllabus features several similarly structured presentations. Example 12 shows one such sentence from *MBC*. In Example 191 Schoenberg first offers a complete presentation featuring a tonic and dominant form in the same palindromic arrangement discussed above. The remainder of the examples offer alternatives for the second basic idea, a module Schoenberg usually described as the “dominant form.” Schoenberg’s Example 193 then features an alternative dominant form for the original basic idea, this time beginning with an inversion of the tonic form. In this sense, it is possible to view Schoenberg’s inversional presentation in Op. 43a as a gesture simultaneously in dialog with both Brahms and with his own *MBC*.

52 Since the themes to Schoenberg’s Op. 43 and Brahms’s Cello Sonata both introduce “remote” motive forms in mm. 3–4, in essence, opposite or contrasting ideas through inversion, their presentation phrases resemble the first four bars of an antecedent phrase. Therefore, these themes can be heard as hybrids of sentence and period forms. They each begin with a two-measure phrase followed by remote variation on the two-measure phrase. As Schoenberg discusses in *MBC*, this is a typical characteristic of antecedent phrases (*MBC*, 8). However, instead of a consequent phrase, each of these themes features a continuation, a phrase type that is characteristic of the sentence. For a contemporary take on these kinds of hybrid themes, see William Caplin, *Analyzing Classical Form: An Approach for the Classroom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 99–121.

Example 12. Inversionally related tonic and dominant forms of foresentences; Examples 191 and 193 from *MBC*, 2016, 81.

The image displays musical notation for seven examples (191-197) in a key with two flats. Example 191 is divided into 'Tonic form' and 'Dominant form'. The tonic form consists of two measures: the first has a circled '1' above a triplet of eighth notes, and the second has a circled '2' above a quarter note. The dominant form also consists of two measures: the first has a circled '3' above a triplet of eighth notes, and the second has a circled '4' above a quarter note. Roman numerals 'I' and 'V' are placed below the notes. Example 192 is labeled 'Alternative (3-4)' and shows a similar structure with circled '3' and '4'. Examples 193, 194, 195, 196, and 197 are labeled 'other alternatives to 3-4 (Dominant form V-I)' and show various rhythmic and melodic variations with Roman numerals 'V' and 'I' below.

This inversional design may not represent the only nod to *MBC* in Schoenberg’s Op. 43a. If the presentation of Schoenberg’s band theme suggests procedures from his syllabus, it is only fitting that its continuation should too. Example 13 compares the continuations from the untitled scherzo in *MBC* and Op. 43a. Despite the harmonic complexity of these groupings, the continuation in Op. 43a remains recognizable as a variation of the one in the untitled scherzo from *MBC*. Melodically, both continuations begin with a motive that features the intervallic succession: +2, -3. In the bass, both continuations begin with a motive that ascends one semitone. In each case, the entire pattern is then sequenced by T_{-2} . This consistent outer voice relationships yields an identical linear intervallic pattern for each of the continuations (d5-M10–d5-M10) (see the second half of Example 13).

Example 13. Comparison of continuation from untitled scherzo in *MBC* and Op. 43.

The image shows musical notation for Example 13. The top staff features two chord progressions: $A_4 \xrightarrow{+2} B_4 \xrightarrow{-3} G_4$ and $G_4 \xrightarrow{+2} A_4 \xrightarrow{-3} F_4$. A dashed line with '-1' above it spans the first two chords of each progression. A circled label 'SEQ: -2' is placed between the two progressions. The bottom staff shows bass line progressions: $D_4 \xrightarrow{+1} E_4$ and $C_4 \xrightarrow{+1} D_4$. The right side of the notation shows a piano accompaniment with chords labeled 'd5' and '10'.

Example 12 is a musical score in G major, 2/4 time. The upper staff (treble clef) contains a sequence of notes: C₄, D₄, B₃, B₃, C₄, A₃. Above the notes are annotations: a dashed line with '-1' above it spans C₄ to D₄; a circled 'SEQ: -2' is above D₄; another dashed line with '-1' above it spans B₃ to C₄. The lower staff (bass clef) contains chords: F₄ to G₄ (with '+1' below) and E₄ to F₄ (with '+1' below). The final two measures show chords with 'd5' and '10' intervals indicated.

Considering Schoenberg's near religious fervor for developing variation, coupled with his utter disdain for anyone who denied its precepts—composers with whom he had once compared to third-rate cooks hiding their culinary incompetency behind cheap, flamboyant dressings—we should not be surprised to find him using such subtle strategies of variation here. What is somewhat surprising, however, is to find him attempting to meet us halfway: to see Schoenberg suddenly at our doorstep with no tie and a cardigan, so to speak. Indeed, *MBC* and Op. 43a together may be read as Schoenberg's greeting card to an American public, one with whom he had had little opportunity to connect prior to these initial invitations.

In undertaking Op. 43a, Schoenberg may have been motivated partly by the financial appeal of band literature. Igor Stravinsky had recently scored a hit with *Circus Polka* (1942), William Schuman was going great guns with his *Newsreel in Five Shots* (1941), and countless big bands including those of Duke Ellington, Glen Miller, and Jimmy Dorsey were blasting the airwaves. Perhaps we can therefore forgive Schoenberg's palpable glee scribbled into margins of Schirmer's response to a recent inquiry he had sent regarding questions of instrumentation and range in the American school band. "There exist more than 20,000 school bands in this country!!!," he writes meticulously in his characteristic red pencil, even outlining the note in a rectangular red box to set it in relief from the rest of the letter.⁵³ The image of Schoenberg the serialist attempting to write a breezy pop tune for the younger siblings of his college freshmen at UCLA, and instead ending up with the impenetrable counterpoint of Op. 43 is a tragic, yet comic one.

But there is more to this story. Op. 43 can be heard as a kindred work to Schoenberg's first American textbook. Both works were written nearly simultaneously; they were aimed at young American musicians, and both make use of the same methods of thematic design, motivic variation, and contrapuntal techniques that Schoenberg taught in his UCLA courses. As we see in Examples 12 and 13, even the theme of Op. 43 may be derived from the exercises in *MBC*. Perhaps the origins of Op. 43 stem from a combination of economic as well as pedagogical motivations—from Schoenberg's desire to communicate to a larger audience, ideas that he had spent the majority of his life formulating, first as a pedagogue in Vienna and Berlin, then as a classroom teacher at UCLA and the University of Southern California.

Either of these make a plausible motive for the composition of Op. 43. Still, there is yet another possible reason Schoenberg might have wanted to write such a piece. Ever since he had launched a 014 rocket into the stratosphere of free atonality in 1908, Schoenberg had cast an envious and mistrustful eye toward composers who maintained superficial ties to tonality. In essays such as "Tonality and Form," and in the Preface to *Three Satires*, Op. 28, Schoenberg had lamented composers who sprinkled triads onto the surface their works like so many tacky cake decorations. He had a name for these "composers": the *pseudo-tonalists*, he called them.⁵⁴ By the

⁵³ Letter from Felix Anton Rudolf Greissle (on behalf of Schirmer) to Arnold Schoenberg, August 21, 1942, https://archive.schoenberg.at/letters/letters.php?action=view&id_letters=15747.

1940s, this sort of incendiary rhetoric becomes less frequent in Schoenberg’s writing. But could Op. 43 be heard as a sort of manifesto in notes? “I am probably the last of the modern composers who has occupied himself with tonal harmony in the sense of the oldest masters,” Schoenberg wrote in 1925.⁵⁵ In several tonal works from the 1930s and 40s, we get a sense of what this connection might have meant to him.

Yet, listeners new to Op. 43 might imagine they have heard some sort of tonal-serial hybrid, a reverse of the blend New York Times critic Anthony Tommasini describes when unassuming listeners encounter “skittish 12-tone riffs and jazzy scatt[ing]” in Bruce Adolphe’s “Crossing Broadway.”⁵⁶ Perhaps such confusion might even be fitting. As Schoenberg once explained it with a touch of Daoist-like absurdity: “My works are twelve-tone *compositions* not *twelve-tone* compositions.” In Op. 43, Schoenberg showed that he could compose tonal music without altering the basic methods of his compositional approach. He demonstrated the transcendence of idea above style.

Whatever our impression of the musical language in Schoenberg’s Op. 43, it seems to have been accessible *enough* for the composer to make at least some headway into the popular concert music of his day. The prickly fugal writing may have proven too difficult to take the thousands of young American bands by storm. And yet, the traditional familiar sentential groupings of Op. 43, its extended tonality, and its popular band instrumentation, provided just enough grounding for the conservative Koussevitzky to single it out as the only work by Schoenberg that he would perform during his tenure as conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (1924–1949).

In a 1949 New York Times Article entitled “Arnold Schoenberg: Apostle of Atonality,” written on the occasion of Schoenberg’s seventy-fifth birthday, Peter Yates, founder of the *Evenings on the Roof Concerts* in Los Angeles, notes the connection between *MBC* and the *Theme and Variations for Wind Band*.⁵⁷ Yates recounts Schoenberg’s familiar depiction of a dual influence on his music, one source of inspiration emanating from the music of Wagner, the other from Brahms. According to Yates, the two late tonal variations (Op. 43 and Op. 40) and *MBC* best exemplify the influence of the latter. Yates seems to point to broad yet significant similarities: the emphasis in each of these works, as in Brahms’s oeuvre, on tonal variation. His analysis is worth reading in its entirety:

Schoenberg was born late enough to comprehend both sides of the argument between the followers of Wagner and the followers of Brahms. The operas of Wagner he soon knew nearly by heart, but the nature of his mind was more akin to that of Brahms. The well-known severity of Brahms toward aspiring young composers did not encourage Schoenberg to seek his acquaintance. One day, however, at the rear of a crowded concert hall Brahms came in and stood beside him. It was their only contact. His continuing affinity for the music of Brahms is shown by two late sets of relatively tonal variations and several of the “Models for Beginners in Composition.”⁵⁸

In Yates’s telling of the story, Brahms seems almost to whisper the secrets of developing variation into Schoenberg’s ear as they stand at back of that darkened concert hall. Is it any wonder, Yates seems to ask, that these principles of tonal variation would find their way into both Op. 43 and *MBC*? Yates’s larger argument has to do with the public recognition of Schoenberg’s music, a trib-

54 Arnold Schoenberg, Preface to the score of the *Three Satires, Op. 28*, in Arnold Schoenberg, *Self-Portrait: A Collection of Articles Program Notes, and Letters by the Composer About His Own Works*, ed. Nuria Schoenberg Nono (Pacific Palisades: Belmont Music Publishers, 1988), 25. It is in this brief essay that Schoenberg refers to Neo-Classicalists as the “pseudo-tonalists.”

55 Arnold Schoenberg, “Tonality and Form,” in *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 256.

56 Anthony Tommasini, “Unraveling the Knots of the 12 Tones.” *The New York Times*, October 14, 2007. <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/14/arts/music/14tomm.html> (accessed July 14, 2023).

57 Feisst, *Schoenberg’s New World*, 177.

58 Peter Yates, “Arnold Schoenberg: Apostle of Atonality,” *The New York Times*, September 11, 1949.

ute he concludes by speaking to the communicative goal that ultimately also unites Op. 43 and Schoenberg's syllabus:

I have seen audiences, here in Los Angeles and Hollywood crowd to hear his music played. I believe that Schoenberg's hope of popular acceptance in the future—in the *near* future—will be justified.⁵⁹

It is doubtful that Yates would have analyzed the specific musical connections between *MBC* and Op. 43a as I have outlined them here. And yet for him, both works show Schoenberg at his most relaxed, never compromising his ideals, but attempting to explain them in a language that American audiences could understand.

Conclusion

Beyond its indispensability to any comprehensive reading of Schoenberg's theoretical ideas, 'Models' matters for the direct access it offers into the content of his instruction. Because it was a *course syllabus*, *MBC* reflects the material and presentation in Schoenberg's beginning composition class. Due to this status as a relatively complete pedagogical artifact, *MBC* offers insights into Schoenberg's teaching. "Models" matters also as a demonstration of Schoenberg's concern for the tastes of American audiences during the 1940s. Its streamlined compositional method based on a modular use of the two-measure phrase, its shared compositional material, and its aim toward young readers, makes it something of a kindred work to the *Theme and Variations for Wind Band*. Could it be that *MBC* still matters today as one of Schoenberg's most usable and practical texts? Might today's budding composers continue to benefit from such a resourceful method that leads so smoothly "from the invention of a melodic phrase, through larger entities to complete small forms."⁶⁰ Carl Engel, President of Schirmer, expressed such hopes when mailing news of the first printed copy of *MBC* to Schoenberg on February 9, 1943: "It was a difficult birth, I admit, but now that the child is with us, I hope it will meet with the father's satisfaction and that it will enjoy a long and happy life."⁶¹

Some eighty years after its initial publication, it would seem that Engel's wishes for the longevity of *MBC* have largely come true. Of all of Schoenberg's writings, I would argue that the concision and accessibility of *MBC* are what make it the most timeless and enduring of his texts: and this is why "Models" matters.

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⁵⁹ Italics added for emphasis.

⁶⁰ Advertisement for *MBC*, from "Bulletin of New Music Published and Imported by G. Schirmer, New York," Bulletin No. 8, 1943. Courtesy G. Schirmer.

⁶¹ Letter from Engel to Schoenberg, February 9, 1943. https://archive.schoenberg.at/letters/letters.php?action=view&id_letters=3786.

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