

The Correspondence between Roberto Gerhard and Arnold Schoenberg

PALOMA ORTIZ-DE-URBINA

On 18 October 1923 Roberto Gerhard, in a creative crisis and seeking guidance, wrote a long letter to Arnold Schoenberg asking to be accepted as his pupil. Two weeks later he received a positive answer and, full of enthusiasm, left for Vienna at once. There he met Schoenberg and began a master-pupil relationship that would gradually turn into deep friendship, as attested by fifty-three extant letters written between 1923 and Schoenberg's death in 1951. Existing in archives in several countries and, for the most part, unpublished, these letters provide a wealth of information about Gerhard's personal life and professional career, with interesting insights into Gerhard's compositional process.¹ There are published editions of letters exchanged between Schoenberg and Alban Berg,² Anton Webern,³ Wassily Kandinsky⁴ and Thomas Mann,⁵ as well as a variety of collections gathering together writings and occasional letters between Schoenberg and various other musicians.⁶ However, the extensive correspondence

¹ A complete edition, in both German and Spanish, of the correspondence between Schoenberg and Gerhard is in preparation by the present writer.

² Juliane Brand et al. (eds), *Briefwechsel Arnold Schönberg – Alban Berg* (Mainz: Schott, 2007).

³ An edition of the correspondence between Webern and Schoenberg is in preparation by Regina Busch and will appear as volume 2 of Thomas Ertelt (ed.), *Briefwechsel der Wiener Schule*, commissioned by the Staatliches Institut für Musikforschung, Preußischer Kulturbesitz: see http://www.sim.spk-berlin.de/disposition_539.html (accessed 9 June 2014).

⁴ Jelena Hahl-Koch (ed.), *Arnold Schönberg – Wassily Kandinsky. Briefe, Bilder und Dokumente einer außergewöhnlichen Begegnung* (Salzburg and Vienna: Residenz Verlag, 1983). See also Jelena Hahl-Koch (ed.), *Arnold Schoenberg and Wassily Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures and Documents*, English translation by John C. Crawford (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1984).

⁵ E. Randol Schoenberg (ed.), *Apropos Doktor Faustus. Briefwechsel Arnold Schönberg – Thomas Mann, Tagebücher und Aufsätze 1930–1951* (Vienna: Czernin Verlag, 2009).

⁶ See Egbert M. Ennulat, *Arnold Schoenberg Correspondence. A Collection of Translated and Annotated Letters Exchanged with Guido Adler, Pablo Casals, Emanuel Feuermann and Olin Downes* (Metuchen, NJ and London: Scarecrow Press, 1991); Erwin Stein (ed.), *Arnold Schoenberg Letters* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964).

between Schoenberg and Gerhard remains largely unpublished, although the above-mentioned letter of 18 October 1923 does appear in a biography of Gerhard by Joaquim Homs.⁷ The letters are written in German, English, French and Catalan and, not surprisingly given the turbulent times in which many of them were penned, were sent internationally from a range of centres including Barcelona, Berlin, Vienna, Paris, Cambridge (UK), New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. Most of the letters are preserved in the Arnold Schoenberg Collection in the Music Division of the Library of Congress, Washington D.C. (hereinafter LOC),⁸ the Gerhard Archive of Cambridge University Library (CUL), the Roberto Gerhard collection (Mus. Nachlass: Roberto Gerhard) in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz (SB), the Wienbibliothek im Rathaus, Vienna (WBR) and the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna (ÖNB), and are accessible digitally through the website of the Arnold Schoenberg Center in Vienna (ASC).⁹ The remaining letters, in the Fons Roberto Gerhard of the Institut d'Estudis Vallencs at Valls, Tarragona (IEV), may be consulted only *in situ*.

On 21 October 1923 Gerhard wrote to Schoenberg as follows:

Most revered Master!

I really do not know where, in my deepest depression, I find the courage to turn to you, if not in the belief of finding in your artistry and deep humanity the advice which will bring me greater self-enlightenment than any more of my despair might achieve.¹⁰

Two weeks later Schoenberg replied, indicating his provisional acceptance of Gerhard as a pupil. Before leaving for Vienna, Gerhard wrote again, expressing the enormous effect on him of his letter and declaring his belief that his life was about to change course:

[...] the thought that you could perhaps show personal interest in me kindles in me a feeling of being at peace with myself, the like of which I haven't felt for a long time. Any help that I could receive from you both in human and artistic terms, would be incalculable. Your mere interest in me should restore peace in a corner of my heart without which, deep down inside, I feel incapable of going on, on top of which there is the other primeval and complete dissatisfaction I

⁷ Joaquim Homs, *Robert Gerhard and his Music*, English edition, ed. Meirion Bowen (Trowbridge: The Anglo-Catalan Society, 2000), 91–5.

⁸ None of the letters preserved in LOC have individual shelfmarks.

⁹ <http://www.schoenberg.at/>

¹⁰ Gerhard to Schoenberg, 21 October 1923 (CUL, Gerhard.3.45.38). Unless otherwise stated, all the correspondence cited in this article was originally written in German and appears here in the author's translation.

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feel almost to the point of paralysis. I accept your invitation to come to Vienna with a real feeling of relief.¹¹

As the letters he sent to Schoenberg confirm, Gerhard took up lodgings in Vienna at Strohberggasse 3/11 in the Meidling district, working as a Spanish teacher to support himself. During these Spanish classes he met his future wife, Leopoldina Feichtegger ('Poldi').¹² In the same city he met Webern (who lived two streets away), Winfried Zillig, Josef Rufer and the American Adolph Weiss; he would strike up life-long friendships with all of them. Since Gerhard then saw Schoenberg regularly for lessons at his home in Mödling, their correspondence ceased for a while but recommenced in April 1925 regarding Schoenberg's concerts in Barcelona and Girona. Eager to introduce Schoenberg to Catalan audiences, Gerhard organized, from Vienna, the Spanish première of *Pierrot Lunaire*¹³ and other works performed by the Chamber Music Association of Barcelona, in collaboration with the Kolisch Quartet, and under the baton of Schoenberg himself.

In early October 1925 Schoenberg was appointed to succeed Ferruccio Busoni as Director of the Master Class of the Berlin Academy of Arts. Gerhard did not hesitate to follow his teacher and become part of Schoenberg's select group of *Meisterschüler* along with Zillig, Rufer, Weiss and Walter Goehr. Gerhard's name appears in the registration data and in examination records in the archives of the Academy, listed variously as 'Robert Gerhard-Kastells' (or Kastell or Castells).¹⁴ Gerhard was to stay in Berlin until 31 December 1928 before returning to Barcelona to take up a senior lecturer position at the Catalan government's teacher training college.

¹¹ Gerhard to Schoenberg, 12 November 1923 (original in LOC; scanned in ASC, ID: 10781).

¹² Homs, 28.

¹³ The première took place on 29 April 1925 in the Palau de la Música Catalana, Barcelona.

¹⁴ The registration documents, as well as Gerhard's marks and reports written by Schoenberg, may be consulted in the archives of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin. For further information about Gerhard's time in Berlin, see Diego Alonso Tomás, 'A breathtaking adventure': Gerhard's Musical Education under Arnold Schoenberg', in CeReNeM (Centre for Research in New Music), *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference Roberto Gerhard* (Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield Press, 2010), 137–151: 137–9, and 'Unquestionably Decisive: Roberto Gerhard's Studies with Arnold Schoenberg', in Monty Adkins and Michael Russ (eds), *The Roberto Gerhard Companion* (Farnham and Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2013), 25–47. An important German account of Schoenberg's Berlin years refers to him as 'Robert Gerhard-Castells', a form which seems to stem from the fact that Gerhard had advertised himself as 'Dr. Castells' in Vienna when he was giving Spanish ('Castellano') lessons. See Peter Gradenwitz, *Arnold Schönberg und seine Meisterschüler. Berlin 1925–1933* (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 1998), 56. Furthermore, the word 'castell' is associated with Gerhard's birthplace, Valls, where the custom of building human towers ('castells' in Catalan) originated.

In 1931, due to Schoenberg's respiratory problems and worsening asthma, his doctor recommended that he move to the drier climes of southern Europe. Schoenberg wrote to Gerhard on 16 September asking him to find accommodation for him in Barcelona and for his help in furthering his musical career there. He sought a furnished flat with all conveniences, costing not more than 100–150 marks in rent and located in a residential suburb of Barcelona 'because one can hardly shut oneself up for months in some sleepy village with no diversions at all. It just has to be well connected, with frequent and cheap services'.¹⁵ Schoenberg also mentioned Berg, whom he was trying to convince to move with him to Barcelona. Gerhard replied, supplying detailed answers to all Schoenberg's queries regarding the climate, medical services, prices, tennis facilities, etc. As for accommodation, Gerhard reported that he had found something suitable, a private house with a garden, well-furnished, quiet and with lovely views.¹⁶

By 11 October, Schoenberg was writing to Webern saying that he was living in a small villa at the very top of a hill with a fabulous view over the city.¹⁷ Twenty-five years later, in January 1956, this house on Bajada de Briz¹⁸ in the Vallcarca district would be commemorated at a ceremony attended by a group of well-known artists, Antoni Tàpies, Josep Cercós, Jordi Torrà and Antoni Nicolás, and composers, José Luis de Delás and Josep Soler—all of whom belonged to the *Dau al Set* group,¹⁹ whose leader was the surrealist, Juan Eduardo Cirlot. After erecting a simple memorial tablet, they listened to a tape recording, organized by the eminent Club 49,²⁰ of the two completed acts of *Moses und Aron*.²¹

In October 1931, Pablo Casals extended a warm welcome to the newly arrived Schoenberg:

¹⁵ Schoenberg to Gerhard, 16 September 1931 (SB, N.Mus.Nachl. 55, 1).

¹⁶ Gerhard to Schoenberg, 20 September 1931 (ÖNB, F21.Berg.1321/338 Mus).

¹⁷ Schoenberg to Webern, 11 October 1931 (WBR, I.N. 185.528).

¹⁸ The number of the house at that time was given sometimes as 13, at other times as 16; see Victoria Cirlot (ed.), *Cirlot en Vallcarca* (Barcelona: Alpha Decay, 2008), 41 and 44. A fascination with the house inhabited by Schoenberg in 1931–32 would inspire Juan Eduardo Cirlot's famous surrealist poem of 1957, *La Dama de Vallcarca* (The Lady of Vallcarca), first published in 1956 and republished in the aforementioned book edited by his daughter, Victoria Cirlot. The house still stands and carries a plaque commemorating Schoenberg's stay in Barcelona.

¹⁹ *Dau al Set* was an artistic movement in Catalonia, founded in Barcelona in 1948.

²⁰ Club 49 was a group founded in Barcelona in 1949 that promoted contemporary music and art.

²¹ See Cirlot, 43–7.

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Honoured Maestro Schonberg [sic]:

Your arrival in Barcelona, for a period of rest, delights us greatly and we would like to give you the warmest welcome. We hope that, after you have had a few days' rest, we will have the pleasure of accompanying you on visits to our notable places and institutions, all of which will be honoured and graced by your presence. [...] ²²

The letter is evidence of the importance given to his arrival. In addition to the signature of the celebrated cellist, the letter also bears those of sixteen other important figures in Barcelonan musical life: Gerhard, Concepción (Conchita) Badía de Agustí, Higiní Anglès, Joaquim Pena, Joan Lamote de Grignon, Ricard Lamote de Grignon, Marian Perelló, Josep Sabater, Francesc Costa, Baltasar Samper, Francesc Pujols, Lluís Millet, Joan Llongueres, Jaime Pahissa, Eduard Toldrà and Josep Barbera. Schoenberg replied on 3 November, expressing his gratitude to Casals. ²³

On 3 April 1932, Schoenberg conducted a morning concert of the Pablo Casals Orchestra ²⁴ at the Asociación Obrera de Conciertos (Working Men's Concert Association), an organization that Casals had founded in 1926 with the aim of providing the working classes with access to music education and concert performances. At this concert were performed Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*, Op. 4, *Pelleas und Melisande*, Op. 5, *Acht Lieder*, Op. 6, and his arrangement for orchestra of J. S. Bach's Prelude and Fugue in E flat major.

Schoenberg's sojourn in Barcelona was one of the happiest periods of his life, as both he and his wife would often recall. There he was surrounded by a select group of musicians and friends who idolized him; he enjoyed the exceptional medical attention of Dr. Sarrós, who had lived in Vienna in the 1920s, and he could also indulge his passion for tennis. The first daughter of his second marriage, who was given the very Catalan name of Nuria, was born in the city. This was also where he composed most of the second act of his opera *Moses und Aron*, a work which would occupy him for at least twenty-two years. ²⁵ As Malcolm MacDonald remarks, 'it is odd to think that he

²² Casals to Schoenberg, October 1931 (the day of the month is unknown). Original in Catalan, IEV, 12_01_050.

²³ Gerhard to Schoenberg, 3 November 1931 (SB, N.Mus.Nachl. 55, 3).

²⁴ See Hartmut Krones, *Arnold Schönberg: Werk und Leben* (Vienna: Edition Steinbauer, 2005), 52.

²⁵ See Stefanie Rauch, *Die Arbeitsweise Arnold Schönbergs: Kunstgenese und Schaffensprozess* (Mainz: Schott, 2010), 231.

wrote some of the deeply tragic final scene of Act II at a window overlooking the sunlit city' whilst listening to his wife and Mrs Gerhard chatting nearby.²⁶



Illustration 1. Roberto and Poldi Gerhard, Miss Maristany, Gertrud and Arnold Schoenberg in Barcelona (1932).²⁷

The correspondence records how Schoenberg attempted to prolong his stay in Barcelona until professional matters forced his decision to return to Berlin at the

²⁶ Malcolm MacDonald, *Schoenberg* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 70.

²⁷ ASC, PH 1264. Reproduced here by kind permission of the Arnold Schoenberg Center. 'Miss Maristany' is Mathilde Mathieu y Prats, wife of the writer Fernando Maristany y Guasch and mother of Carlos Maristany, a contemporary music lover and concert promoter who was a close friend of Gerhard and Schoenberg, and who often received the Schoenbergs in Maristany's home. She has been incorrectly identified as Gerhard's mother by Bojan Bujic (*Arnold Schoenberg* (New York: Phaidon, 2011), 162), but comparison with two other photographs taken on the same occasion confirm her identity. See CUL, Roberto Gerhard Archive, Music CB3 Blog, document MS.Gerhard.23.129, and ASC Image Archive's documents PH 1246, PH 2658, PH 2657.

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beginning of May 1932. In the event, his departure had to be postponed for several days because of the premature arrival of Nuria on 7 May.²⁸ Poldi and Gertrud, both of whom had been born in Vienna, became close and lifelong friends in Barcelona, writing to each other frequently. On 2 June 1932, Schoenberg arrived back in Berlin and the following day wrote to Gerhard telling him about the journey, made, in the end, not by train but by plane. Schoenberg described the flight as being magical, but also a bit scary, particularly as it was his first time.²⁹

A month later the Gerhards holidayed in Tulln, close to Vienna, from where they sent a long and affectionate letter to Schoenberg, dated 2 July.³⁰ The letter also attests to the friendly relationship between the Gerhards and Rudolf ('Rudi') Kolisch and Rufer. They state their increasing concern over the political situation in Germany and suggest that Schoenberg might consider returning to Barcelona. In the German parliamentary elections at the end of the same month, the Nazi Party would become the leading political force. Gerhard recounts the positive reception of his *6 Cançons populars catalanes* at the annual festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music in Vienna. He relates that Webern conducted the concert and put together a great performance despite few rehearsals, that Conchita Badía sang wonderfully and that the songs were a great success. Schoenberg never received this letter,³¹ but on 14 August wrote a postcard to Gerhard expressing the wish to move to Barcelona in the winter.³²

On 15 November 1932, Schoenberg sent Gerhard a letter insisting that he was hoping to return to Spain in mid-February 1933, asking him to arrange concerts and invitations for him and suggesting that a programme such as the one he had performed for Casals the previous year was sure to go down well throughout Spain.³³ On 21 December 1932, Gerhard wrote a long letter in reply in which he stated that he and Poldi were hoping to see the Schoenbergs again in Barcelona in February and by then to have secured contracts for the projects that Arnold had mentioned in his last letter.³⁴ Gerhard explained that Casals was not yet back from his tour and but that he thought

²⁸ Schoenberg announced the birth in a circular letter to family and close friends: 7 May 1932 (SB, N.Mus.Nachl. 55, 56). He used the address of the clinic since it was likely that they would not return to the villa.

²⁹ Schoenberg to Gerhard, 2 June 1932 (SB, N.Mus.Nachl. 55, 4).

³⁰ Gerhard to Schoenberg, 2 July 1932 (original in LOC; scanned in ASC, ID: 10783).

³¹ See letter of 15 November 1932 (SB, N.Mus.Nachl. 55, 7).

³² Schoenberg to Gerhard, 14 August 1932 (SB, N.Mus.Nachl. 55, 5).

³³ Schoenberg to Gerhard, 15 November 1932 (SB, N.Mus.Nachl. 55, 7).

³⁴ Gerhard to Schoenberg, 21 December 1932 (IEV, 12_01_051).

that Casals would be in contact with Schoenberg in connection with the *Gurrelieder*. He also explained that he had already prepared the ground with Kolisch's agent in Madrid, Daniel, to whom he had proposed a concert tour of Spain, and how a meeting was soon to be held in Barcelona to discuss the matter.

This letter also supplies new information about the gestation of Gerhard's cantata for soprano, baritone, chorus and orchestra, *L'alta naixença del Rei en Jaume* (The Noble Birth of the Sovereign Lord King James), of 1932 (revised, 1933). Gerhard recalls in the letter that he had begun the work in Vienna (having interrupted work on an orchestral piece) and that it was resumed, with encouragement from Universal Edition, as a cantata:

I found a text in Catalan which I like a lot and which allows scope for a musical structure which can be quite similar to adaptations of popular songs as far as national colour in terms of melody and rhythm are concerned. [...] The text [...] is partly lyrical, partly of epic character, and it contains some episodes which evoke the spirit of Balzac's *Contes drôlatiques*. Unfortunately [the cantata] is somewhat long, I estimate that the composition lasts 45 minutes [...]. I have now completed two-thirds of it in a full instrumental sketch. As for the last part, I've only sketched the main ideas. The piece is divided into two parts, and they in turn are organized into a total of 14 pieces, partly independent (they may even be performable individually) and partly dependent on each other. I've been at constant pains to produce the greatest possible variation of the musical character and the vocal and instrumental treatment in order to counteract the danger of length [...].

The text to which Gerhard refers is a poem by Josep Carner, who, according to Leticia Sánchez de Andrés, suggested that the composer set it to music.³⁵ Julian White describes the cantata as 'typical of Gerhard's works of the 1930s, in which he achieves an almost Bartókian synthesis of European modernist and Catalan popular traditions'.³⁶ In the letter, Gerhard expresses his desire to show Schoenberg this work, in particular the two movements (Passacaglia and Chorale) which he had just sent to Amsterdam to the jury of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM). Gerhard felt, however, that he had little hope of winning as he knew none of the jury members that year, except for Max Butting, the board member for the German section of the ISCM, who he suspected would not remember him, probably because he only knew him as Castells.

³⁵ Leticia Sánchez de Andrés, *Pasión, desarraigo y literatura: el compositor Robert Gerhard* (Madrid: Fundación Scherzo and Machado, 2013), 356–63.

³⁶ Julian White, 'Promoting and Diffusing Catalan Musical Heritage', in Adkins and Russ, 49–77: 61.

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Meanwhile, on 30 January 1933, Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. On 20 February, Schoenberg, who normally wrote in French to Casals even though he was not particularly fluent, wrote this time to him in German.³⁷ The letter states that Schoenberg had arranged a cello concerto after Georg Matthias Monn's Harpsichord Concerto in D major and wished to offer it first to the cellist. Schoenberg had arranged this work between November 1932 and January 1933 and had already shown a draft to Casals when he was in Barcelona in February 1932. The progress of this performance project can be traced in the letters he sent to Casals, using Gerhard as a mediator. Writing on 25 February 1933, an 'absolute world première' in October in Barcelona is proposed by Gerhard, with Schoenberg himself conducting Casals in the concerto. From 1931 to 1950, a number of letters exchanged between the three of them bear witness to Schoenberg's ultimately fruitless struggle to achieve this aim due to the technical difficulties Casals encountered in the score and financial problems surrounding possible publication.³⁸

In another long letter, dated 25 February 1933,³⁹ Gerhard explains Casals's reluctance to perform *Gurrelieder* for fear of the costs. The Spanish writer and music critic, Joaquim Pena, seemed to be willing to help, however, and had discussed the matter with Gerhard in December. The economic instability in Spain immediately before the civil war did not make things any easier. But Gerhard believed that they could take advantage of the Kolisch Quartet's tour, planned for the autumn, and combine it with the Spanish première of *Pierrot Lunaire*; he even suggested the names of musicians who could take part: the singer Conchita Badía, the pianist Alejandro Vilalta, and Casals's wind musicians. Gerhard also mentions the Austrian pianist and disciple of Schoenberg, Eduard Steuermann, who had been the piano soloist at the Berlin première of *Pierrot Lunaire* in 1912. Steuermann's wife had just written to Gerhard's wife enquiring about Barcelona prices and lifestyle, as the couple was planning to move there in March. Gerhard thought that such an 'Austro-Spanish Pierrot-Ensemble' might be well received in South America too, where his friend and musical representative, Daniel, did his main business. Gerhard also suggested the ADLAN

³⁷ Schoenberg to Casals, 20 February 1933 (original in LOC; available in ASC on microfilm only, ID: 2221).

³⁸ See José María García Laborda, 'La correspondencia de A. Schoenberg con Pau Casals: edición, contexto e interpretación', *Nassarre: Revista aragonesa de musicología*, vol. 20 no. 1, 2004, 223–60. Laborda's article can be complemented by recourse to the relevant letters in ASC and IEV.

³⁹ Gerhard to Schoenberg, 25 February 1933 (original in LOC; scanned in ASC, ID: 10782).

Society of Barcelona,⁴⁰ which might pay Schoenberg 1,000 pesetas for a chamber music recital or a lecture.

After thanking Schoenberg for his very kind words about his cantata *L'alta naixença del Rei en Jaume*, Gerhard describes how the two excerpts that he had sent to the ISCM would be performed despite some earlier compositional concerns: they have 'been accepted and will be premièred on 11 June, in a choral concert, together with an oratorio by the Englishman William Walton [*Belshazzar's Feast*] and a piece by the French composer Jean Cartan'.⁴¹ Gerhard also expresses concern at the reaction of other composers who had unsuccessfully submitted works in the same section as him. 'Since none of their works were accepted, the mood in our section became somewhat unfriendly: they suspected again that I was utilizing 'connections', just as they had reproached me concerning Webern!'

This letter to Schoenberg also refers to two *sardanas* that Gerhard was scoring at the time on Schoenberg's advice. His intention was to add two further pieces to form a dance suite which might eventually become a ballet entitled *Sardanas*, and he was thinking of composing 'a free choreographic fantasy on the dance and its movements'. He also tells Schoenberg that he had listened to a concert of his music broadcast from London on the radio at the house of Higiní Anglès, a well known Spanish musicologist. He reports how impressed he had been by the music and how Anglès had defined it as 'modern Bach'.

On 27 February 1933, the Reichstag in Berlin was burnt down, civil liberties for Jews and others were restricted and the first concentration camps were set up for the detention of political dissidents. As yet seemingly unaware of the gravity of the situation, but sensing the growing desperation shared by all Jews and increasingly strained by his economic difficulties, Schoenberg wrote to Gerhard on 18 March stating his decision to leave for Barcelona and asking him once more about how to set about it.⁴² Five days later, on 23 March, Hitler secured approval of the Enabling Act which brought parliamentary government to an end and established him as constitutional dictator. In April 1933 the boycott of Jewish commerce was set in train together with the elimination of Jewish functionaries from the civil service. Gerhard knew nothing of this and on 25 May 1933 wrote to Schoenberg expressing his delight

⁴⁰ ADLAN (*Amics de l'Art Nou*) was an artistic Catalan movement founded in Barcelona in 1932 by Joaquim Gomis, Joan Prats and Josep Lluís Sert, with the aim of promoting avant-garde art.

⁴¹ See also Jennifer Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922–1936: Shaping a Nation's Tastes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁴² Schoenberg to Gerhard, 18 March 1933 (SB, N.Mus.Nachl. 55, 11).

to hear that he was already in Paris.⁴³ He informed him that the concerts with Casals, the ADLAN Society and the Conference Club were confirmed, as were also a remunerated talk and some concerts and another talk in Madrid, fruits of his negotiations with the Centre of Studies and with the composer and conductor Gustavo Pittaluga. He also offered to go with his wife to pick him up in Paris, for they were both worried: 'The news that reaches us here about Germany is very confusing'.

In July 1933, Gerhard received a disturbing letter from Schoenberg in Paris, asking for help for his son Georg (by his first marriage), who had a wife and four-year-old daughter.⁴⁴ Uncertain whether to send him to Spain or Jerusalem, he reminds Gerhard that he had told him that Spain might afford protection to the descendants of Spanish Jews, for the maternal grandmother of his son had been a Sephardi. He also asks Gerhard to look for some work for his son. On 6 August, Gerhard replied to Schoenberg from Sant Salvador, where both Conchita Badía and Casals had houses, extending Badía's offer to Schoenberg of her own house.⁴⁵ On 22 September, Schoenberg wrote to Casals from Arcachon, Gironde, telling him how he had been dismissed without warning from his post in Berlin and asking him, desperately this time, to première, with him, his Monn concerto.⁴⁶ On 5 November 1933 Gerhard wrote saying that he had just read in the papers about Schoenberg's appointment to a position in Boston: 'It has come as a hard blow for us, but also a relief'. He continues: 'I have just received a contract for 2500 pesetas with Fernández Arbós and the Madrid Symphony Orchestra [...]. Casals has continued to work on your cello concerto and says that he has now overcome all the technical difficulties'.⁴⁷ Gerhard tells Schoenberg on 4 September 1934, writing from Sant Salvador, that Casals would play the Cello Concerto that autumn at the Schoenberg-Festival and that Casals wishes to begin the rehearsals from mid-October.⁴⁸ Schoenberg tried to bring forward the première but, due to political circumstances, the concert with Casals never took place. The concerto was finally premiered two years later in London by the soloist Emanuel Feuermann, in Schoenberg's absence.

⁴³ Gerhard to Schoenberg, 25 May 1933 (IEV, 12_01_057).

⁴⁴ Schoenberg to Gerhard, 20 July 1933 (SB, N.Mus.Nachl. 55, 15).

⁴⁵ Gerhard to Schoenberg, 6 August 1933 (IEV, 12_01_059).

⁴⁶ Schoenberg to Casals, 22 September 1933 (original letter in French, preserved in LOC; scanned in ASC, ID: 2432).

⁴⁷ Gerhard to Schoenberg, 5 November 1933 (IEV, 12_01_060).

⁴⁸ Gerhard to Schoenberg, 4 September 1934 (original in LOC; scanned in ASC, ID: 19191).

The correspondence continued until 1935.⁴⁹ Gerhard would be the driving force behind the festival held in Barcelona in 1936 by the International Society for Contemporary Music, which saw the première of Berg's Violin Concerto. That same year, on 17 July, the Spanish Civil War broke out, on account of which Gerhard, a known sympathizer of the Republican side and supporter of home rule for Catalonia, would go into exile, first to France and then to Cambridge, England, where he was to live for the rest of his life.

In 1944, after a break of nine years during which only occasional telegraphed birthday greetings were exchanged, Gerhard and Schoenberg resumed their letter writing. In response to Schoenberg's telegram suggesting that Gerhard might write a short 'autobiography' of himself going back to 1933, 'when we saw you in Paris [...]',⁵⁰ Gerhard wrote in English from Cambridge on 2 December 1944: 'I don't suppose you'd want me to go into our experiences of two revolutions, one civil war and the 5 years of world war nr.2. We feel we have had more than a fair share and we only wish that the rest might be got quickly over for all of us [...]'.⁵¹ He continues by relating aspects of his personal and professional career since 1935:

In '35 we went to Prague for the meeting of the International Society for Contemporary Music, where I had a difficult time with Hába and Eisler over the then projected '36 Festival in Barcelona (they wanted to have it in Moscow instead). We got it all right and I think I wish we hadn't. You may have heard about it I dare say. On the whole I think it was considered a success, though I must say I feel it a great loss that my personal relationship with Webern came to a sad pass on that occasion [...]

Webern had fallen out with him over Gerhard's role in his replacement as conductor of the première of Berg's Violin Concerto by Hermann Scherchen. Next Gerhard writes about how he went to Warsaw for the ISCM jury meeting, but that 'by the time we were back in Paris, everything was over in Catalonia. My youngest brother who still lives in Valls was able to save and store most of our belongings'. He also reports on the fate of other Spanish composers during and after the Civil War:

Joaquim Homs, whom I taught for some time, has been 'banished', that is to say, forced to take up residence in Valencia as a punishment for having been in Paris in '37 (where a work of his was performed) and then returned to Barcelona instead of Burgos. Conchita Badía [...] is now

⁴⁹ The last letter known to survive from the 1930s is one from Gerhard to Schoenberg, 21 December 1935 (original in LOC; scanned in ASC, ID: 10785).

⁵⁰ Schoenberg to Gerhard, 3 October 1944 (SB, N.Mus.Nachl. 55, 19).

⁵¹ Gerhard to Schoenberg, 2 December 1944, in English (original in LOC; available from ASC on micro-film only: SatCollL10, reel 26, frames 730–3).

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living in Buenos Aires [...], Falla too is residing in Argentina; Casals is still in Prades, in the South of France, where he has lived for the past 5 years.

Gerhard writes also about his last meeting with Kolisch and the invitation from King's College Cambridge from Edward J. Dent:

It was in spring '39 when we last met Rudi Kolisch in Paris and heard your 4th String Quartet [...] when out of the blue came an invitation from King's College Cambridge offering me a 'research-scholarship' for two years with the only condition that I would take up residence here [...]. I don't need to add that I owe the invitation entirely to the kindness of Prof. Dent.

He refers to how happy they were in England since then, in spite of the climate and flatness of the landscape.

Gerhard recalls that, in his first year at Cambridge, he had not written much more than a first Violin Concerto, with which he was not happy, but then was more productive. He also describes recent progress on several compositional fronts including three new ballets, much incidental music for radio plays, a string quartet, a symphony, and, in particular, his second Violin Concerto, which includes a homage to Schoenberg on his 70th birthday by quoting the row from his Fourth String Quartet to display his 'immense gratitude' to him and his 'pride in having been privileged to count myself among your disciples'.⁵² Gerhard, despite his closeness to Schoenberg, had not yet adopted twelve-tone composition and reveals doubts about his ability to do so: 'I have not found it possible for me yet to work consistently with 12-tone series. I find the desire to work with poorer series insurmountable. A full series usually grows with me out of an exceptionally tone-rich feature which is thematically relevant.'

Whether Schoenberg gave Gerhard his blessing for the birthday tribute is not known. The next existing letter is dated 8 June 1949, in which Schoenberg, writing from Los Angeles, rather teasingly treats Gerhard as an internationally established and renowned composer: 'I've been hearing about your great successes recently. Everybody writes to me about them. So you've finally become a great composer and I'm no longer important enough to be honoured with a letter from you, am I?'⁵³ Schoenberg assumed incorrectly that Gerhard was a lecturer at Cambridge and so asks him to act as his intermediary to have his *Variations on a Recitative* for organ played. Gerhard answered on 20 July, mentioning how he and his wife would like to take up Schoenberg's invitation and visit the Schoenbergs in California and how he is toying

⁵² See Michael Russ, 'Music as Autobiography: Roberto Gerhard's Violin Concerto', in Adkins and Russ, 131–52.

⁵³ Schoenberg to Gerhard, 8 June 1949 (SB, N.Mus.Nachl. 55, 20).

with the idea of composing a ballet for America and possibly making the trip the following spring. He clarifies that he is not teaching at Cambridge and that his only contacts with the academic world there are social.⁵⁴ However, he explains that he had accepted an invitation from the Music Faculty to give a course on twelve-note composition the following year, although he thought that he should have consulted Schoenberg first. So he asks him for his 'permission', recognizing the 'responsibility' such a task meant for him. Over the following months, this letter was followed by several others in which Gerhard wrote of his plans to have his own *Don Quixote* ballet performed in New York and London.⁵⁵

But, without doubt, the last letter that Gerhard wrote to Schoenberg, on 16 December 1950,⁵⁶ is the most interesting, for it reveals much about the period of theoretical reflection that underpinned the future direction of his compositional technique.⁵⁷ This substantial letter in many ways anticipates Gerhard's important article 'Tonality in Twelve-Tone Music' of 1952.⁵⁸ Gerhard begins by writing about some of his own piano pieces, which were to become his *Three Impromptus* and were inspired by Schoenberg's new treatment of a twelve-tone series in his Piano Concerto. He is referring to Schoenberg's *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, Op. 42, composed in 1942, which demonstrates a freer use of octaves but, most importantly, embraces, in Gerhard's analysis, the technique of hexachordal permutation which was to be at the heart of Gerhard's own twelve-tone technique. Gerhard goes so far as to state that the same principle is to be found in Schoenberg's *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte*, Op. 41 (1942) and can be traced back to his one-act opera *Von heute auf morgen*, Op. 32 (1928–29) and, even before that, to the *Tanzszene* in his *Serenade*, Op. 24 (1920–23). Eager to know if his supposition is correct, he sets out for Schoenberg his interpretation of the 'novel treatment' of the twelve-tone series. According to Gerhard, 'the order in the sequence of the 12 tones (for example, the first row which appears in Op. 42) is not to be regarded

⁵⁴ Gerhard to Schoenberg, 20 July 1949 (original in LOC, scanned at ASC, ID: 10788).

⁵⁵ See, for instance, a letter from Gerhard to Schoenberg of 19 December 1949 in which Gerhard tells Schoenberg that Sadler's Wells had shown interest in *Don Quixote* (original in LOC, scanned at ASC, ID: 10787).

⁵⁶ Gerhard to Schoenberg, 16 December 1950 (original in LOC; scanned at ASC, ID: 10790).

⁵⁷ An exploration of this topic was made in Paloma Ortiz-de-Urbina and Michael Russ, 'Roberto Gerhard and Post-Tonal Theory: A Last Letter to Schoenberg', a conference paper jointly presented at the Third International Roberto Gerhard Conference held at the University of Alcalá (Spain), 6–7 June 2013. I wish to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Michael Russ regarding the analysis of the technical contents of this letter.

⁵⁸ Roberto Gerhard, 'Tonality in Twelve-tone Music', *The Score and I.M.A. Magazine*, 6 (1952), 23–35.

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as an absolutely final basic principle. Each row constitutes a singular appearance, which in turn can be traced back to a completely abstract and final basic principle’.

The tone of Gerhard’s explanation may be gleaned from the following passage, which also stresses the importance he placed on the prime form of hexachords:

The two halves of the series, the two hexachords, are presented in such a way that their tones occupy the narrowest scalar or ‘harmonic’ space. The key thing from this point of view is the fact that there is no fundamentally or definitely pre-established temporal order for the series of tones within the hexachord. Any arbitrary series can, in a manner of speaking, be privileged from a thematic point of view or, more precisely, from a compositional point of view, in an absolutely binding and mandatory fashion. Thus a nexus is created between your new and your earlier treatment of the series, both of which are devised on a common basis. Viewed from an abstract basis, the tones may appear, however, in a random order within the hexachord. To what extent it is possible to combine the two hexachords is more difficult to formulate than to put into practice. I can only formulate this negatively: the combination of the hexachords only makes sense if they can still be recognized as such. But if their relationship is no longer recognizable, then neither is its basis. However, the combination could go a long way if some particular interval structure was made thematically prominent at some point (like, for instance, in the Coda sections of your Piano Concerto), and thus, on compositional grounds, the ‘dichotomy’ of the hexachords would be subservient to the possibilities offered by the ‘unit’.

Gerhard, like Schoenberg, was uncomfortable with the term ‘atonality’. In the letter he refutes once and for all the ‘theoretically unwieldy’ idea of atonality which he understood as being the ‘absolute negation of a centre’. Any such idea would, according to Gerhard, have to be based on the assumption of an infinity of tonal relations for ‘the absolute denial of a centre in a finite tonal system is obviously impossible’. As he saw it, then, it was ‘the idea of a centre, and not its permanence which matters and which needs to be redefined’. Furthermore, in ‘this respect, it seems to me that the relationship between the two hexachords corresponds to the function of the three fundamental chords in tonal music’.

In addition, Gerhard offers other thoughts about, for example, the number of possible chords, going so far as to criticize the theoretical work of Alois Hába and to point out how Hindemith had made the same mistakes:

Given that each hexachord needs, as a complement, a second unique hexachord, every 12-tone series is determined by the already complete first. I’ve reached this result after carrying out a systematic analysis of the structure of hexachords. Hába, in his ‘Neue Harmonielehre’, comes to completely wrong conclusions: there aren’t 119 different six-note chords, as he states—and so many have thoughtlessly followed him—but no more and no less than 80. What always misleads him is the same mistake: he forgets, for instance, the identity of C–D–G and C–F–G in the trichords, counting them as two constitutionally distinct chords. An error—repeated by Hindemith—which would be the same as Rameau overlooking the identity of one chord in its inversions (or, in this parallel case, in its transposed inversion).

In the letter, Gerhard computes his own list of the number of chords, or what would now be called pitch-class sets of each cardinality. His calculations go somewhat astray, as George Perle points out in a response to the same calculations when published in Gerhard's article 'Tonality in Twelve-tone Music'.⁵⁹

Gerhard also included a paragraph in which he asks Schoenberg about the permutation of a twelve-tone series by 7, something that intrigued Berg. He had noticed that multiple applications of this permutational technique results always in a series in which each hexachord is a hexatonic scale (pitch-class set 6–20). This very series had been used by Schoenberg in his *Ode to Napoleon*, raising questions in Gerhard's mind as to whether Schoenberg held this series to be of particular importance:

I have tried to find possible relationships between the different 12-tone basic forms and have ended up with strange results and I wanted to ask your opinion about their value. You know about the permutation of a 12-tone series by 7 which was apparently of interest to Alban Berg. I have never been clear about the potential significance of such an operation. Out of curiosity I placed them into the three categories of basic forms, with the following results: the permutation of the chromatic scale results in the circle of fifths. This in turn may be understood as two hexachords constituted in such a way that within the hexachords all tones occupy the most compact space, thus leading to a diatonic major scale minus leading-tone in both hexachords. Consequently, there seems to be a relationship between the chromatic scale, the circle of fifths and the (6-tone) diatonic scale. Is then permutation by 7, which reveals such relationships, really to be taken seriously? When it is applied it appears to be even stranger. If one takes the result of a permuted line back to form two new hexachords arranged in the narrowest of spaces, and permutes them again by 7, the result is as follows: some basic forms end with one permutation, others with two permutations or others with three permutations up to one and the same basic form, which allows nothing more; i.e. one permutation of this last basic form just results in transpositions, but no longer constitutionally different basic forms. Therefore we can say that any random series of 12 bears a relation of first, second or third member to this unique last basic form, which I'm tempted to call a Terminus-Series. Its form is as follows: C, C#, E, F, G#, A–D, Eb, F#, G, Bb, B (or its transposition). So, if I'm not mistaken, this is your 'Ode to Napoleon' series. Is it pure coincidence that you chose this curious series, precisely for this work? As always, I have to express my admiration for the amazing fact of, let's say, the 'higher equalization' of the series concerning the artistic intention of your work.

Thus Gerhard sought his teacher's opinion; but, unfortunately, Schoenberg had only months to live and his poor health probably explains the brevity of his response to this lengthy and theoretical discussion. In April 1951, Schoenberg's secretary, Richard Hoffmann, produced a typewritten circular communicating that his employer had been ill for several weeks. Schoenberg himself, with a trembling hand, added a

⁵⁹ See George Perle, 'The Possible Chords in Twelve-tone Music', *The Score and I.M.A Magazine*, 9 (1954), 54–8.

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short note for Gerhard explaining that he had been unable to find the time to study the issues he had raised. Apparently, the bedridden Schoenberg had to have Gerhard's theories read to him, stating that 'from what I hear they are not easy to understand and right now they are too much for me'.⁶⁰ This was to be the last letter Gerhard received from Schoenberg, who died on 13 July 1951. Schoenberg's wife would continue to write to the Gerhards, as late as 1955 recalling with affection and nostalgia the *Bajada de Briz* in Barcelona.⁶¹

A reading and analysis of the fifty-three letters exchanged by Schoenberg and Gerhard enriches our knowledge of the lives and works of both men, but particularly of the younger, and charts the transformation of a professional teacher-student relationship into one of close friendship. For the most part the letters do not explore the technical details of each man's work; indeed, in many respects Gerhard, during Schoenberg's lifetime, pursued a compositional path that may not always have met with Schoenberg's approval, not least in the way that Gerhard consistently drew upon the folk music of his native Catalonia. However, the final letter is an important exception. As Schoenberg reaches the end of his life, Gerhard, while not wishing or presuming to take up the mantle of his teacher, seems to be exploring his teacher's compositional principles as the basis for a transformation of his own, a transformation that would rapidly move beyond Schoenberg's serial organization of pitch to that of duration and rhythm, but in way quite distinct from that of the Darmstadt School. Furthermore, his theoretical exploration of serialism, in this letter to Schoenberg and in subsequent articles, marks him out as a significant figure in the development of non-tonal theory.

In the nineteen years of Gerhard's life that remained after the death of Schoenberg, he composed his most elaborate works, including his symphonies 1–4 and the Concerto for Orchestra, and pioneered electroacoustic composition in Britain. While Gerhard was never a slavish copier of his master, Schoenberg was both catalyst and mentor to him, allowing Gerhard to embrace twelve-tone writing and make a significant contribution to twentieth-century music.

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⁶⁰ Schoenberg to Gerhard, 11 April 1951, original in English and German (SB, N.Mus.Nachl. 55, 22).

⁶¹ Gertrud Schoenberg to Roberto and Leopoldina Gerhard, 8 March 1955 (SB, N.Mus.Nachl. 55, 28).