PART I

PERSONAL EVALUATION AND RETROSPECT

1

ON MY FIFTIETH BIRTHDAY: SEPTEMBER 13, 1924

Someone has confided in me, strictly between ourselves and everyone else, that there is a secret plan afoot to surprise me on my fiftieth birthday with an issue of *Anbruch* devoted to my work. More than that, I have been invited to help surprise myself by contributing an article.

However, I am only inclined to send myself best wishes if I can give a satisfactory answer to this question: are other people the only ones obliged to consign me to the rubbish heap, or must I join in? That is to say, has my productiveness begun to slacken off or am I still capable of posing (or even solving) riddles? Are any other symptoms of old age present? In a word, am I already 'finished'?

There are various things I am not finished with; that is why I have published less than I have written, and written less than I have thought. So I need not feel that the number of works I have published points to any conclusion. However, the ideas that have lately filled my mind: perhaps they might point the way? The musical side is not very informative: certainly I shall soon write the small section of *Die Jakobsleiter* which is necessary before the first part of it can be published;[1]* then a second, shorter choral work, whose text is already completed.[2] In these, as in certain still smaller works (chamber music) I shall be concerned with developing the technique of 'twelve-tone composition', whose first steps I tried out in certain movements of the *Serenade* and the *Five Piano Pieces*, and particularly in the *Piano Suite* and the *Wind Quintet*.[3] Much the same applies to my intentions in the theoretical field. After all, I had decided a good fifteen years ago to write treatises on counterpoint, form and instrumentation (the arts of laying out and setting parts),[4] and many of my drafts (often revised) date from then or the years between. More recently, I have made some discoveries which compelled me to revise the small work entitled *The Theory of Musical Cohesion*

* See Sources and Notes, p. 513ff.

into the more ambitious *The Laws of Musical Composition*, and similarly to compile not a simple counterpoint text-book but a *Theory of Polyphonic (Contrapuntal) Composition*; and finally, to plan an article, 'Laws of Composition With Twelve Tones'.[5]

But, despite a relatively large amount of preliminary labour and considerable progress, all these works in their present state, and far as they are from being finished, need completion if I am to prove my productive energies undiminished; that will probably be the only way of restoring faith, at least for those who recognise a creator not by what he conceives but only by what he carries out. 'Let there be light!'—one may believe that, and leave it at that.

So even if it seems like blowing my own trumpet, I cannot muster the self-denial needed to keep quiet about minor matters; there are, understandably, many such—and if I pick out such trivia as 'A Genuine Twelve-Tone Notation', 'A New Explanation of Ornaments, Complex Ornaments, Appoggiaturas, etc.', 'Discussion, Representation and Correct Description of All Tempo- and Performing Indications',[6] I am all the more glad to do so since it is the best way of proving my genuine desire to see myself objectively—with an objectivity that will leave my best enemy nothing more to do.

If all this has still not convinced my incorrigible friends of something which less well-disposed people assume at the outset: that I have reached my limit, that, as a true pace-maker, I have been overtaken (for everything gets overtaken, one's co-runners and followers are so robust); that, in a word, I have arrived at the place where many people would, in the interests of their plans for the further development of musical history, be glad to see me—then I am obliged to mention one clear symptom of age which is present in my case: I can no longer hate as once I could. Sometimes, and this is worse still, I can even understand without feeling contempt.

That speaks for itself! It seems I have to wish myself all the best—so that, once here, it may give me cause to say that I am not yet ready for the rubbish heap.

Mödling. August 20, 1924

2

CIRCULAR TO MY FRIENDS ON MY SIXTIETH BIRTHDAY: SEPTEMBER 13, 1934

I must, above all, explain why I have been so long in saying 'thank you' for the many messages of congratulation on my sixtieth birthday. But before even that, let me say I was able to enjoy it all extraordinarily, and was fully content, even though we passed the day without any kind of ceremony and with not a single guest. The first to greet me were Trude and Nuria, then came the many telegrams, the letters, and the fabulous *Festschrift*;[1] this all gave me far more pleasure than the public could ever provide. Although I shall not forget the comfort I once derived from being fêted by the city of Vienna, and from the speech made by Mayor Karl Seitz, a man who is today so unfortunate; I should have been glad, this day, to send him a token of my gratitude, for he is a man to respect far above any party allegiance.

On September 13th our luggage for the journey was already partly packed. Some time previously we had become convinced that the best thing for me would be to go to Hollywood, or at least to California, and in the last weeks of August we decided definitely. I will now give a short survey of my first year in America, which ended on October 31st.

I have to say that for disappointments, annoyance and illness it was worse than quite a lot I have been through so far. The first disappointment came while we were still in Paris, for there was absolutely no reaction to the news that I had to leave Berlin, and we faced the worrying prospect of a very uncomfortable winter in France. I had, indeed, long since lost my earlier ideas of what an American engagement would have to offer—by now, the streets were clearly not going to be paved with gold. But then the Malkin Conservatory offered me rather less than a quarter of what I had regarded as compensation for my Berlin salary, that is to say as a minimum; by now I had been sufficiently softened up to accept this solitary offer, after a few hours' reflection. The next big disappointment, to mention only the more important things, was discovering that I had carelessly agreed to teach, for the same salary, not only in Boston but also in New York—a demand, made at a late stage, whose insidious nature I failed to detect. These journeys, every week, were the main cause of my illness. Then: on

the way from Washington to Boston I asked Malkin what the conservatory orchestra was like, and on my arrival in Boston I found a little school of music with perhaps five to six classrooms. The school set its hopes on me, but it had been announced to the public much too late; moreover, it demanded fees more than double anything that could be managed during the depression, and was caught in a cross-fire of intrigues stemming from poverty and philistinism, so that in Boston and New York I had a total of 12 to 14 pupils, some of them complete beginners. There was also a bright side. The League of Composers arranged a concert (only chamber music, though!), and a very big reception—2,000 people were said to have been there; I had to shake hands certainly with 500 of them, and the Committee of Honour was said to include everyone in New York interested (in any way) in art. Soon after, there was another reception, also a very noisy affair, but I cannot recall who gave it.

The actual teaching I enjoyed. Even the more mature pupils had covered the ground-work very inadequately, but all the same I had two really talented ones and a few with some talent. Apart from this, so much new material had been accumulating in me during the previous months that I was able to tell my pupils really a great deal which was quite unknown to them, and surprised them very much. In Boston I had a concert with the resident symphony orchestra, which is extraordinarily good. There, too, I met Pollatschek.[2] The permanent conductor is Serge Koussevitzky, once a travelling double-bass virtuoso, who in the ten years he has been there has never played a *single* note of mine. In my firm opinion he is so uneducated that he cannot even read a score—at any rate, even orchestral musicians told me that he has engaged two pianists, who play him each new piece as a piano duet, as many times as are needed for him to get to know it. Even then he does not take all the rehearsals himself, but first lets the concert-master rehearse, and sits in what he thinks is a dark corner, following and conducting. As everywhere throughout the world, there are many charlatans here too. I conducted a kind of final rehearsal of the concert in Cambridge (a small town linked to Boston), but at half past two on the afternoon of the day I was due to conduct it for the first time in Boston (Friday, January 12th), I had an attack of coughing in the lift of our house; I tore something, and this gave me such violent pains in the back and chest that I could not move, even though I was bandaged. I had already been ill since the early days of December (as soon as the bad weather set in), but was able to keep going, more or less, and carry

out my duties to some extent, thanks to medicaments which obviously did me harm. The climate there is bad, you see, and was particularly so that winter. Within 12 or 24 hours the temperature will go down by 60 or more degrees Fahrenheit, i.e. 34 Centigrade. In March this sort of sudden change of temperature started again, and I had a horrible attack of asthma, made worse on this occasion by irritation of the heart (the doctor gave me iodine for the cough, although I had told him not to: as they call it 'iodine' and I knew it as 'Jod', we did not realise what it was. It checks, but does not heal, the illness, which therefore soon breaks out again. In addition, it did such harm to my stomach that for at least two months I could eat absolutely nothing but weak tea, ham and toast. And this affected the heart). I then had to take great care of myself in April, May and June, but during the summer spent in Chautauqua[3] I recovered very quickly, though not enough to be able to risk another winter anywhere near New York. My engagement at Malkin had expired at the end of May, and although there was interest in me everywhere (except among the conducting gentlemen), and people were anxious to secure my services as teacher (so far I have had to refuse five such offers), there was nothing that offered security, except in New York or Chicago, where I could not live. On the other hand, I was amazed, if only at the start, by the attitude of the conductors, with the exception of Stock in Chicago. Over here, butter is easier to come by than judgement about art, so that one rarely finds many people interested, and even when they are, they tend to get things all wrong. The artistic luminaries, especially the conductors, seem to get the largest ration, for they are in charge—that is what attracted them, and it is hard to think of anything else they would be good for. They have performed, at most, *Verklärte Nacht* or one of my Bach-arrangements, but, for the most part, not a single note. On the other hand, Stravinsky, Ravel, Respighi and many others are widely played. It is very much as in Europe; here too, I have a really great number of—well, what am I to call them?—one can't properly say 'adherents', because it is rarely more than a matter of their coming round at some time in the future, but they are people who will do so when the right occasion offers. All the same, I can say that interest in me is only just awakening. The younger people are all very much on my side, and the general opinion is that I am 'on the way in'. But not for people like Walter and Klemperer. It goes without saying that over here Klemperer plays Stravinsky and Hindemith, but not a note of mine, except Bach-arrangements.[4] And Walter,

indeed, was always (for safety's sake I must pressingly beg you to regard what I say as entirely confidential, and to prevent its reaching the public, let alone the press. To fight these forces on that basis would at the moment be too much for me, but I shall certainly carry the fight through to the end, on a different basis!) —so, Walter is a magnificent conductor (in private, however, he has always been a nasty creature; I feel sick whenever I think of him, and avoid doing so as far as possible).

Los Angeles (Hollywood is a sort of Floridsdorf or Mödling[5] of Los Angeles, only with the difference that here they produce those splendid films, whose highly unusual plots and wonderful sound give me so much pleasure, as you know) is a completely blank page, so far as my music is concerned. From time to time someone (Goossens, Rodzinsky, Slonimsky) has tried out a piece of mine, but has succeeded only in confirming the public still more in its distaste for new music. The blame lies, as ever, with the conductors. For example, in San Francisco the Philharmonic orchestra has not played a single note of mine in 25 years; take careful note of the name Alfred Hertz! All these gentlemen, from sergeant downwards (there is no upwards), call themselves conservatives, an expression whose meaning I have worked out as follows: they have nothing else to guard, to conserve, but their own lack of ability, ignorance, and cowardice; these they guard so that nobody shall get to know about them. For that reason I have also refused to conduct concerts here and in San Francisco, for I should like to see the punishment fall on those who are guilty. This has made me many enemies, but I do not think I need fear them, for on the other hand I have many friends. As a teacher, I mean. Unfortunately I cannot demand decent fees, and receive only one-third to two-fifths of my New York price, but already I have a course with 10 pupils, and one or two in private, so I am sure that, once people know I teach, those who can pay more will also come, and I shall be able to exist here quite well. In the summer, for six weeks, I shall give two lessons every day (except on Saturdays and Sundays) at the local University of Southern California. Here again payment isn't princely, but at least the three summer months are covered. Moreover, I am now in demand in New York. We had been here scarcely more than a week when I received an offer from the Juilliard School of Music, the largest and richest American music college; unfortunately I had to refuse, because we could not risk a New York winter. But the director, Ernest Hutcheson, a very good pianist and musician, and a delightful man, whom I got

to know in Chautauqua, now wants me to go next year, and I can only hope I shall be well enough to accept. That would be a very good position, in every way, since over here all the other good and important things are inseparably linked to such posts. But I should also be well content to stay here. Today, the 25th of November, I am sitting by the open window, writing, and my room is full of sunshine! Having written so much about myself, I should now like to say a little more about my wife and Nuria; this place suits them very well, too. We have a very charming little house, not too large, furnished, with many amenities customary here but hardly known at all in Europe. Once we can have our furniture—it is still in Paris, because the German government has so far refused to pay the balance of my salary for 22 months—we shall probably rent an unfurnished house. This will be still cheaper, and we shall also look for one rather more into the hills, where there is still less damp and more sun.[6] I have not yet resumed work on my opera,[7] but am writing a Suite for String Orchestra, *tonal*, a piece for student orchestras. I am writing it at the suggestion of a musician who teaches at New York University,[8] conducts a student orchestra there, and has told me very many heartening things about this American student orchestra —there are hundreds like it. It has convinced me that the fight against this awful conservatism has to start here. This piece will become a veritable teaching example of the progress that can be made within tonality, if one is really a musician and knows one's craft: a real preparation, in matters not only of harmony but of melody, counterpoint and technique. A stout blow I am sure, in the fight against the cowardly and unproductive.

Warmest greetings to all my friends

Arnold Schoenberg, 5860 Canyon Cove, Hollywood, California
November, 1934

3

HONORARY CITIZENSHIP OF VIENNA

1949

Seven cities are recorded as claiming to be Homer's birthplace.

Up to a short time ago the contrary seemed to be the case with me. Though not seven cities were involved, I still remember a man saying with authority about me: 'And if he were Mozart himself, he must get out!'

But now, after having acquired the honour of American citizenship, another honour has come to me: the Mayor, His Excellency, General Dr. Theodor Körner and the Senate *der Stadt Wien* have conferred upon me the *Ehrenbürgerrecht der Stadt Wien.* It is perhaps superfluous to state that this honour makes me extremely happy and that I am proud that it is this city for whose love and recognition I would make my greatest sacrifice.

That I have reached this goal now is abundant and generous reward as well as an unexpected one. While I vow herewith artistic allegiance to the place from which my music originated, and all my knowledge, I have to confess that, in order to do this, I had to forget that I had planned it differently.

And now, your Excellency, let me thank you and the Mayor of Vienna and its Senate again for the great honour and joy your generous action has given me.

October 23, 1949

4

HOW ONE BECOMES LONELY

1937

My *Verklärte Nacht*, written before the beginning of this century—hence a work of my first period, has made me a kind of reputation. From it I can enjoy (even among opponents) some appreciation which the works of my later periods would not have procured for me so soon. This work has been heard, especially in its version for orchestra, a great many times. But certainly nobody has heard it as often as I have heard this complaint: 'If only he had continued to compose in this style!'

The answer I gave is perhaps surprising. I said: 'I have not discontinued composing in the same style and in the same way as at the very beginning. The difference is only that I do it better now than before; it is more concentrated, more mature.'

Ex. 1 *Verklärte Nacht*, 105–10