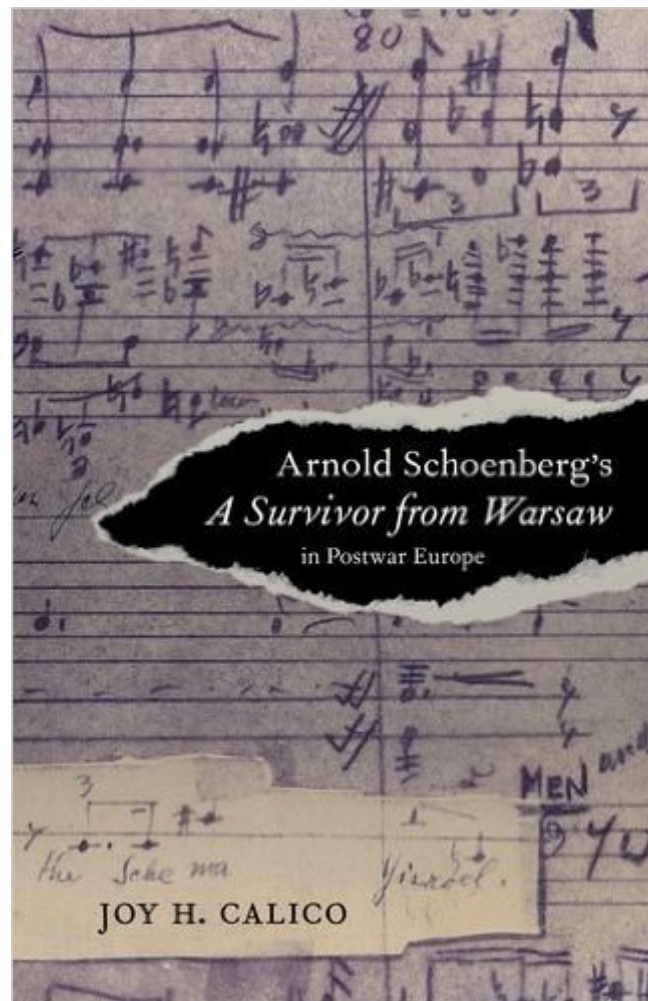


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Arnold Schoenberg's A Survivor From Warsaw In Postwar Europe (California Studies In 20th-Century Music)



Synopsis

Joy H. Calico examines the cultural history of postwar Europe through the lens of the performance and reception of Arnold Schoenberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw*; a short but powerful work, she argues, capable of irritating every exposed nerve in postwar Europe. Schoenberg, a Jewish composer whose oeuvre had been one of the Nazis' prime exemplars of *entartete* (degenerate) music, immigrated to the United States and became an American citizen. Both admired and reviled as a pioneer of dodecaphony, he wrote this twelve-tone piece about the Holocaust in three languages for an American audience. This book investigates the meanings attached to the work as it circulated through Europe during the early Cold War in a kind of symbolic musical remigration, focusing on six case studies: West Germany, Austria, Norway, East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. Each case is unique, informed by individual geopolitical concerns, but this analysis also reveals common themes in anxieties about musical modernism, Holocaust memory and culpability, the coexistence of Jews and former Nazis, anti-Semitism, dislocation, and the presence of occupying forces on both sides of the Cold War divide.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Arnold Schoenberg's work "A Survivor from Warsaw" op. 46 was one of the major triumphs of the composer's career while in exile in the United States. Written in 1947, it presents the account of a Holocaust survivor over a dramatic twelve-tone orchestral backing; the man that the reciter plays is

an imaginary character that Schoenberg came up with himself, drawing on the varied reports coming from Europe after the war. At the climax, a male choir enters in with the Hebrew "Sh'ma Yisroel", the hymn that also serves as an age-old symbol of Jewish faith and identity. This book by Joy H. Calico is dedicated to how "A Survivor from Warsaw" came to Europe in the first two decades after Schoenberg composed it. Not only was the piece being performed among audiences still very aware of the war years, but its reception was also buffeted by the winds of political quarrels and geopolitics. The performance history of the piece is in fact a mirror of postwar -- and sometimes Cold War -- Europe. Calico describes performances and the reception of "A Survivor from Warsaw" in West Germany, Austria, Norway, East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia between 1948 and 1968. (The European premiere in France is passed over, as little evidence remains of it.) For each country she looks at the musical personalities who managed to get Schoenberg's work programmed and the bureaucratic challenges they faced. Some of these Schoenberg supporters, like Norwegian composer Pauline Hall, were interesting characters themselves and will spur the reader on to learn more about them. Calico then goes through the press reactions to the concerts and notes what political orientation each newspaper had.

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