

## DIGITAL RESOURCE REVIEW

# Schenker Documents Online

The unpublished work of Heinrich Schenker (1868–1935) has long fascinated scholars interested in the origins and development of his analytic method. Most of his unpublished papers can be found in two archives: the Oster Collection, housed in the New York Public Library, and the Oswald Jonas Memorial Collection, located at the University of California at Riverside.<sup>1</sup> These collections of letters, diaries, lesson notebooks, essays, analyses, annotated scores, proof pages for published works, and annotated copies of published volumes have provided us with a much broader picture of Schenker's life and work than is available from his published books and essays alone. Scholars have made productive use of the material in these archives over the last 30 years.<sup>2</sup>

Since 2003, a team of scholars under the leadership of Ian Bent has been gathering, editing, translating and uploading a treasure trove of materials emanating from these archives, along with supplementary material from numerous other libraries and private collections. Their work makes much of this material available to scholars for whom the archives were previously inaccessible. The Schenker Correspondence Project (<http://mt.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/schenker/>) represents the initial phase of the project, the goals of which were to transcribe and translate the extant correspondence of Heinrich Schenker. Even at this early stage, The Schenker Correspondence Project went beyond what was available in the two archival collections by locating and publishing both sides of the correspondence whenever possible. In 2007, the scope of the project was expanded considerably, and external funding was obtained. The project was renamed Schenker Documents Online ([www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/index.html](http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/index.html)), and while the earlier site remains accessible, its contents are being systematically moved to the larger database. Currently, the goals of the project are to provide transcriptions and translations of the complete correspondence, daily diary entries and lesson notebooks of Heinrich Schenker – a monumental task. The website

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<sup>1</sup> The Oster Collection is available complete on microfilm at many research libraries, and a descriptive index/finding aid exists. See Robert Kosovsky, comp., *The Oster Collection: Papers of Heinrich Schenker: A Finding List* (New York: New York Public Library, 1990); also available online at [http://archives.nypl.org/uploads/collection/pdf\\_finding\\_aid/musjob89-25-ZB-2237.pdf](http://archives.nypl.org/uploads/collection/pdf_finding_aid/musjob89-25-ZB-2237.pdf). An online guide to the Jonas collection can be found at [www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf4j49n9zc/](http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf4j49n9zc/).

<sup>2</sup> While the bibliography of material emanating from these archives is far too extensive to list here, significant representative studies include Heinrich Schenker, 'The Decline of the Art of Composition: A Technical-Critical Study', transcribed and translated with an introduction by William Drabkin, *Music Analysis* 24/1–2 (2005): 3–232; Ian D. Bent, "'That Bright New Light': Schenker, Universal Edition, and the Origins of the *Erläuterung* Series, 1901–1910', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 58/1 (2005): 69–138; and Jason Hooper, 'Heinrich Schenker's Early Conception of Form, 1895–1914', *Theory and Practice* 36 (2011): 35–64.

currently lists 23 contributing scholars, most of whom are widely known in Schenkerian music theory. While the project is ongoing and nowhere near complete, the tremendous amount of material now available on the site has already had a major impact on research publications.<sup>3</sup>

The site is attractively designed, and the interface is admirably simple to navigate. Figure 1 reproduces an image of the site's home page; the nine main links arrayed horizontally across the top of the page provide intuitive starting points for the user's exploration. When one of these links is chosen, submenus appear on the left side of the subsequent page, and helpful directions for effective searching and browsing techniques are presented as introductions to those functions. As an introduction to the site, users should first read the materials under 'project information' and 'colloquy' as these provide informative overviews of the significance and scope of the project. Users are then encouraged to explore the site using the 'browse' and 'search' functions.

Each entry, be it a letter, diary entry or lesson book item, is displayed on the screen in parallel columns, with the original German in diplomatic transcription on the left, and the English translation on the right. Documentary source, original location, transcriber and translator are clearly identified, and the site includes clear instructions for citation of information found within the database.<sup>4</sup> Pages throughout the site can be printed or saved in portable document (.pdf) or epub format; this is true of individual data entries and of search results.<sup>5</sup>

A database is only as useful as the organizational and search tools available for accessing its records. Schenker Documents Online allows users to search or browse the site using familiar Boolean limits, and the 'browse' and 'search' pages include helpful instructions for successful navigation. The online instructions and suggestions are exceptionally user-friendly, and should spur curious users to 'shelf-browse' their way through the collections in addition to helping with targeted searches. As a single test case, I was easily able to locate references to Alfred Lorenz, the well-known theorist of form in Wagner's music dramas, in Schenker's correspondence. I then cross-referenced the letters found with a secondary search of the diaries from the same period as the letters. As with any search engines, an experimental approach to searches reveals the idiosyncrasies of applying appropriate search limits to find what one is looking for efficiently.

An additional aspect of the site design that should be of great help to researchers is the 'profiles' link from the site's home page. Here, in addition to brief encyclopedia-type articles about each term, one can rapidly find all site entries related to persons, places, organizations, individual works by Schenker, journals and individual compositions.<sup>6</sup> Presuming that the cross-referencing of these search engines to the constantly increasing number of entries is complete

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<sup>3</sup> The site provides an extensive bibliography of Schenker's published work and secondary sources related to it; most notable here is the section of this bibliography devoted to research that emanates from materials posted on Schenker Documents Online. See [www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/colloquy/bibliography.html](http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/colloquy/bibliography.html); I counted 46 discrete published items listed as related to, or emanating from, Schenker Documents Online. The vast majority of these are authored by scholars who have contributed to the online project.

<sup>4</sup> [www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/editorial\\_guide/how\\_to\\_cite.html](http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/editorial_guide/how_to_cite.html).

<sup>5</sup> Occasionally my efforts to save documents as .pdfs resulted in garbled formatting.

<sup>6</sup> Many of the encyclopedia entries for this section of the site are yet to be written. The search parameters for each term or name, however, are fully functional for all uploaded documents.

The screenshot shows the homepage of Schenker Documents Online. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: HOME, PROJECT INFORMATION, BROWSE DOCUMENTS, SEARCH, COLLOQUY, EDITORIAL GUIDE, PROFILES, HELP, BLOG. The main header features the site title 'Schenker Documents Online' and a large image of handwritten musical notation. Below this image is a text box: 'This single-page letter - a note rather than a letter, perhaps - offers some opinions and analytical thoughts on materials that O.E. Deutsch had sent him six weeks earlier. See more ▶'. To the right of the main image are three document thumbnails with titles: 'Letter from Schenker to Otto Erich Deutsch, May 15, 1930 (OJ 5/8, [3])', 'Page of Schenker's diary, late January and early February 1907', and 'Page of Schenker's lessonbook for 1923/24'. The main content area is divided into three columns. The first column, 'Heinrich Schenker', contains a biographical paragraph. The second column, 'Schenker Documents and this Edition', contains a paragraph about the archive's scope. The third column, 'Latest', contains a 'What's New?' section with a sub-heading 'Weinberger, Hertzka, Willfort; new profiles' and a paragraph about new biographical information, followed by a 'FROM THE BLOG' section.

Fig. 1 Schenker Documents Online Home Page

and accurate, this search engine alone allows researchers to find much of what they may be looking for quite easily.<sup>7</sup>

Readers curious about the types of materials available in this vast database, but unsure of where to begin, would be well served by examining two recent print publications directly related to the online project. For those desiring an initial foray into Schenker's correspondence, approximately 450 letters have been published in translation in *Heinrich Schenker: Selected Correspondence*, organized in six large areas which span the range of Schenker's entire professional life. The letters illuminate Schenker's work and life as a composer, analyst, teacher, author, husband, polemicist, concerned citizen and much more.<sup>8</sup> This volume provides a manageable selection from the over 7,000 items of correspondence that will eventually appear in the online database, organized by the editors and translators into individual narrative subplots that illuminate particular relationships and problems (e.g., Schenker's fraught negotiations with publishers, and his mentorship of his student Felix-Eberhard von Cube).<sup>9</sup> For a broad survey of the significant findings made possible by searching through the online database, several articles collected in a recent issue of *Music Analysis* expand our understanding of Schenker's teaching methods, listening habits, analytic procedures, and his religious, social, and political concerns.<sup>10</sup> The range of findings in these essays is impressive, revealing the potential of Schenker Documents Online for scholars across disparate fields of inquiry.

Readers of this journal will find much of interest here. Schenker's knowledge of, and interest in, a tremendous wealth of musical repertoire that he discussed infrequently, if at all, within his published works is revealed in his listening habits, diaries, teaching repertoire and correspondence. Contrary to the widely held belief that Schenker dismissed all music not composed by his short list of 12 genius composers, the material collected here reveals a highly nuanced critical mind, with deep knowledge of the music of, to take a random sample, Wagner, Meyerbeer, Smetana, Dvořák, Liszt, Tchaikovsky, Rossini and Richard Strauss. While many of these composers and their works are referenced in Schenker's earlier publications (especially *Harmonielehre* (1906) and *Kontrapunkt I* (1910)), their work is rarely discussed in the analytical and theoretical volumes published between 1920 and 1935. Schenker Documents Online thus provides a necessary, and revelatory, corrective to our understanding of Schenker's position regarding important repertoire. Readers will also be interested in Schenker's knowledge of, and correspondence with, important musicologists of his time, including Anthony von Hoboken, Otto Erich Deutsch and Guido Adler.

It should be obvious that the lines of research made available through Schenker Documents Online are most directly related to improving our understanding of

<sup>7</sup> One caveat regarding the current state of the composition index: some works are listed in the index more than once. As a result, the user must click on 'Prelude in C Major', 'Prelude in C Major (BWV 924)', and 'Zwölf kleine Prelüdien, No. 1 in C Major, BWV 924' to find all of the documents related to J.S. Bach's well-known composition.

<sup>8</sup> Ian Bent, David Bretherton and William Drabkin, eds, *Heinrich Schenker: Selected Correspondence* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> For a review of this volume by Jan Miyake, see *Music Theory Online* 21/4 (2015): [www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.15.21.4/mto.15.21.4.miyake.html](http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.15.21.4/mto.15.21.4.miyake.html).

<sup>10</sup> See *Music Analysis* 34/2 (2015), *passim*. The articles are by Ian Bent, David Bretherton, Marko Deisinger, Georg Burgstaller, Kirstie Hewlett, Hedi Siegel and Andrea Reiter. Six of the essays were first presented at a special session of the Fifth International Schenker Symposium at Mannes College, The New School in March 2013.

Schenker's life and work within its historical time and place. In this sense, Schenker Documents Online is a musicological project more than a music-theoretical one, or, if viewed as music-theoretical, is more concerned with Schenker's place in the history of music theory than with Schenkerian analysis as a current analytic endeavour. Reading through Schenker's correspondence, diary entries and lesson books, it is quite clear that Schenker himself viewed his analytical method in direct relation to his understanding of contemporary events, and that it was also informed by his faith. As a single representative example of the complex interpenetration of ideas within Schenker's personality, his draft letter to Wilhelm Furtwängler of 11–16 November 1931 is unsurpassed.<sup>11</sup> Even a casual reading of this letter will give pause to those who believe that Schenker's analytic method and practice can or should be understood independently from the historical and social context that gave rise to it.<sup>12</sup> However, it should not be assumed from this that analytically oriented scholars will find nothing of interest here. The lesson notebooks and correspondence reveal aspects of Schenker's pedagogy and theoretical development that are not accessible through the published writings. Schenker included voice-leading sketches in a number of his letters, discussing fine points of analysis with his correspondents. His exchanges with Felix-Eberhard von Cube are particularly well known in this regard, but Schenker Documents Online makes available numerous additional examples that show us not only how pieces may be better understood, but also what and how Schenker taught individual pupils.<sup>13</sup>

Schenker Documents Online has tremendous potential as a resource for students and scholars with research interests in disparate fields. While one can never predict the interpretive directions and uses to which this considerable amount of material will be put, it is fairly certain that it will become a primary research source in multiple fields of scholarship. The research team involved in this project continues to provide a tremendous service to the scholarly community, and is wished continued success as the database grows.

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<sup>11</sup> See [www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/correspondence/OJ-5-11\\_1b.html](http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/correspondence/OJ-5-11_1b.html), or *Heinrich Schenker, Selected Correspondence*, pp. 310–15.

<sup>12</sup> The debates over this topic have been quite heated. Two significant sources on either side include Carl Schachter, 'Elephants, Crocodiles, and Beethoven: Schenker's Politics and the Pedagogy of Schenkerian Analysis', *Theory and Practice* 26 (2001): 1–20; and Suzannah Clark, 'Review Article: The Politics of the Umlinie in Schenker's *Der Tonwille* and *Der freie Satz*', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 132/1 (2007): 141–64.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, William Drabkin, 'Schenker, the Consonant Passing Note, and the First-Movement Theme of Beethoven's Sonata Op. 26', *Music Analysis* 15/2–3 (1996): 149–89; *Heinrich Schenker: Selected Correspondence*, pp. 371–2 (an exchange between Schenker and Moriz Violin regarding the correct analysis of Bach's Two-Part Invention in C, BWV 772; Violin wistfully replies, 'I did not understand the voice-leading of your sketch'; and Schenker's lesson book entry for his work with Hans Weisse on a wide range of nineteenth-century repertoire: [www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/lessonbooks/OC-3-3\\_1923/r0010.html](http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/lessonbooks/OC-3-3_1923/r0010.html)).