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“An Idea Can Never Perish”: Memory, the Musical Idea, and Schoenberg’s *A Survivor* *From Warsaw* (1947)

AMY LYNN WLODARSKI

Schoenberg’s *A Survivor from Warsaw* (1947) is a contested piece, both lauded and decried for its representation of the Holocaust. Even though it employs the 12-tone technique, *Survivor* is often attacked for its overly mimetic representation of the libretto, a compositional approach that Richard Taruskin describes as banally reminiscent of Hollywood film soundtracks.¹ Other scholars have viewed *Survivor* not only as a legitimate response to the Holocaust but also reflective of Schoenberg’s rededication to his Jewish faith; after 1979, when the *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* published an issue dedicated to a reconsideration of Schoenberg’s Jewish heritage, the biographical implications of *Survivor*’s libretto began to attract considerable attention. The result was a body of scholarship that posited *Survivor* as evidence of Schoenberg’s self-identification as a Jewish composer. In *The Composer as Jew*, for example, Alexander Ringer argues forcefully that

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Arnold Schoenberg poured all his sorrow and the full measure of his Jewish pride into a unique mini-drama, a relentless crescendo from

¹ See Richard Taruskin, “A Sturdy Bridge to the 21st Century,” *New York Times*, 24 August 1997. Taruskin’s emphasis on the popular nature of *Survivor*’s musical language, which he contends reaches the level of banal *kitsch*, leads him to describe the choral *Shema Yisroel* as “tonal” when, in fact, it is a twelve-tone series.

beginning to end of unmitigated horror defeated by unyielding faith, that paean to Jewish suffering *A Survivor from Warsaw* . . . [in which] virtually all of Arno Nadel's criteria for a genuinely Jewish musical intonation combine in a dodecaphonic public exhortation.²

A decade later, David Liebermann cited the 12-tone setting of the *Shema Yisroel* as proof that Schoenberg had rewritten his "will [and withdrawn] from German music the right to inherit that which he considered his most enduring legacy and which he had developed specifically for the benefit of German music: the method of composing with twelve tones related only to one another."³

Despite such passing references to dodecaphony, most studies of *Survivor* have concentrated their analytical attention on instances of textual mimesis, including audible fanfares, weeping motives, and the final choral prayer.⁴ As Christian Martin Schmidt notes, most analyses of the piece tend to divorce a discussion of *Survivor's* textual topic from a consideration of its 12-tone compositional structure.⁵ In 1998 Beat Föllmi dismissed outright any significant interplay between *Survivor's* meaning and the style and idea of its 12-tone language, contending that

the twelve-tone technique does not contribute to the hermeneutical layers of the composition in the first part [of *Survivor*, mm. 1–80]. While it is true that the form of many motives is determined through the twelve-tone technique, their symbolic character is obtained either through naming [i.e., "Reveille"] . . . or/and through references to conventional and traditional models.⁶

² Alexander Ringer, *The Composer as Jew* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 203.

³ David Liebermann, "Schoenberg Rewrites His Will: *A Survivor from Warsaw*, Op. 46," in *Political and Religious Ideas in the Works of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Charlotte M. Cross and Russell A. Berman (New York: Garland, 2000), 212–13.

⁴ David Schiller does engage the 12-tone rows in his 2003 analysis, but his primary emphasis falls more on their generated motives rather than their ordering and unfolding within the piece. See Schiller, *Bloch, Schoenberg, Bernstein: Assimilating Jewish Music* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2003).

⁵ Christian Martin Schmidt, "Schönbergs Kantate *Ein Überlebender aus Warschau*, Op. 46," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 33 (1976): 175. Schmidt concludes that *Survivor* enacts the historical development of Schoenberg's compositional style in its shift from an aphoristic style in the first half of the work to a strict dodecaphonic method at the conclusion.

⁶ Beat A. Föllmi, "I Cannot Remember Ev'rything: eine narratologische Analyse von Arnold Schönbergs Kantate *A Survivor from Warsaw* Op. 46," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 55 (1998): 55. "Auffälligerweise reicht im ersten Teil die Zwölftontechnik nicht in die hermeneutischen Schichten der Komposition. Zwar ist die Form vieler motive durch die Zwölftontechnik bestimmt, ihren Zeichencharakter erhalten sie aber entweder durch Benennung . . . oder/und durch die Referenz auf konventionelle bzw. traditionelle Muster."

Such arguments depend on a problematic assumption about *Survivor*: namely, that the 12-tone technique is external to the work's dramaturgical concerns. These comments also reinforce a general presumption that Schoenberg's serious 12-tone works belong to the abstract realm of the "purely musical," which explains why *Survivor*, with its overt text-music relationships, rarely figures into broader discussions of the composer's dodecaphonic corpus.

These assertions have been challenged over the years by various musicologists, among them Carl Dahlhaus, who argued that Schoenberg's American repertory in particular shows increasing coordination between musical and extramusical parameters.⁷ Charlotte Cross appears to concur, arguing that Schoenberg's theory of *Gedanke* (musical idea) also engages extramusical contexts—that a musical idea is not "sheerly musical."⁸ Indeed, Schoenberg himself often described the musical idea in fundamentally human terms, as the basis for "an articulated organism, whose organs, limbs, and their definite functions exercise their own external effect as well as that of their mutual relationship."⁹ He reprised the metaphor in a discussion of musical form: "Form is the organization of the whole, in which the parts function like those of an organism. Form is not a schema to be abstracted from or imposed upon the work. . . . Form organizes, articulates the musical organism."¹⁰ In the dedicatory essay "Gustav Mahler," Schoenberg again used physical, human terms to illustrate the importance of totality in a musical work: "Art does not depend upon the single component part alone; therefore, music does not depend upon the theme. For the work of art, like every living thing, is conceived as a whole—just like a child, whose arm or leg is not conceived separately."¹¹ His description of music as a living body recalls a similar passage in which he distinguishes the parts of an inanimate object from "functioning limbs, [which] are found only in organisms and that, unlike parts—which are actually

⁷ See Carl Dahlhaus, "Schoenberg and Program Music," in *Schoenberg and the New Music: Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987).

⁸ Arnold Schoenberg, *Gedanke* Manuscript no. 12 [GMS 12], quoted in Patricia Carpenter and Severine Neff, "Schoenberg's Philosophy of Composition: Thoughts on the 'Musical Idea' and Its Presentation," in *Constructive Dissonance: Arnold Schoenberg and the Transformations of Twentieth-Century Culture*, ed. Juliane Brand and Christopher Hailey (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1997), 149. In this article, the *Gedanke* Manuscripts will be abbreviated as GMS; the number following designates which manuscript is being discussed. For a chronological listing of the *Gedanke* Manuscripts, see Carpenter and Neff, *Constructive Dissonance*.

⁹ Schoenberg, GMS 10, as cited in Carpenter and Neff, *Constructive Dissonance*, 153.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Schoenberg, "Gustav Mahler," in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1984), 458.

dead—sustain their power as a result of their organic membership in a living organism.”¹²

This essay explores one particular humanistic topic—memory—and uncovers its myriad expressions in *Survivor*, with particular attention to how the rows themselves encode ideas about mnemonic recall and retention found in the libretto. References to human memory appear throughout Schoenberg’s *Gedanke* Manuscripts [GMS], in which the composer often used memory to illustrate musical cohesion and comprehension, as well as in *Survivor*’s libretto, which depicts the traumatic witness of a Holocaust survivor. On the basis of these texts, I analyze the cantata in terms of Schoenberg’s own mnemonic principles, considering how musical language and poetic meaning relate to the *Gedanke* of the work. Although Carpenter and Neff note that Schoenberg never posited an explicit connection between the GMS and his 12-tone technique, John Covach argues that identification of a “general musical poetics” in the composer’s theoretical writings “opens the possibility of comparing Schoenberg’s tonal [theoretical writings] and [his] 12-tone compositions.”¹³ As Covach writes, such analyses help us to “understand the intellectual context in which Schoenberg’s music and thought developed” and interpret different applications of the 12-tone method and their hermeneutic implications.¹⁴ In the case of *Survivor*, the merger of music and text works together to articulate the grander idea of personal and cultural memory, an interpretation with potential implications for the cantata’s musical and religious significance within Schoenberg’s corpus.

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Musical Unconsciousness and Textual Consciousness in Survivor

In 1947 Schoenberg composed *A Survivor from Warsaw*, a Holocaust cantata that enacts traumatic memory explicitly in its libretto. It opens with a narrator’s monologue that pointedly refers to the limitations of human memory:

¹² Carpenter and Neff, *Constructive Dissonance*, 153.

¹³ John Covach, “Schoenberg’s ‘Poetics of Music,’ the Twelve-Tone Method, and the Musical Idea,” in *Schoenberg and Words: The Modernist Years*, ed. Charlotte M. Cross and Russell A. Berman (New York: Garland, 2000), 312.

¹⁴ Covach, “Schoenberg’s Poetics,” 312. As Dahlhaus himself stated, “contexts do not relate directly to one another, but rather relate separately to a common poetics,” which argues against wholesale analytical applications. Instead, each piece engages musical expression in a manner appropriate to its subject matter and in keeping with Schoenberg’s poetical sensibilities. See Dahlhaus, “Schoenberg’s Poetics of Music,” in *Schoenberg and the New Music*, trans. Derrick Puffett and Alfred Clayton (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987), 73–80.

I cannot remember ev'rything, I must have been unconscious most of the time; I remember only the grandiose moment when they all started to sing, as if prearranged, the old prayer [the *Shema Yisroel*] they had neglected for so many years—the forgotten creed! But I have no recollection how I got underground to live in the sewers of Warsaw for so long a time.¹⁵

The narrator then recalls various instances of Nazi brutality and one moment of Jewish resistance: the choral singing of the *Shema Yisroel*, the Jewish profession of faith, which comes at the conclusion of the piece. Schoenberg appears to have based *Survivor's* dramatic content on a story relayed to him by Corinne Chochem, a Jewish dancer born in Russia who came to be involved in programs of Jewish dance in New York City.¹⁶ Chochem wished to compile a Holocaust commemorative album that would include music by prominent Jewish composers, and she wrote to Schoenberg to request his participation in the project. As Michael Strasser notes, this exchange between Chochem and Schoenberg seems to have hatched the initial idea for *Survivor*. In a letter dated 2 April 1947, Chochem shared with Schoenberg the music and words to Hirsh Glick's "Never Say There Is Only Death For You" (*Zog nit keynmol oz du gehst den letzten Weg*), a partisan song that had been "sung by [sic] the Vilna Ghetto."¹⁷

Never say that there is only death for you
The leaden skies may be concealing days of blue—
Because the hour that we have hungered for is near;
Beneath our tread the earth shall tremble: We are here!

From land of palm-tree to the far-off land of snow
We shall be coming with our torment and our woe.
And everywhere our blood has sunk into the earth
Shall our bravery, our vigor blossom forth!

We'll have the morning sun to set our day aglow,
And all our yesterdays shall vanish with the foe,
And if the time is long before the sun appears,
Then let this song go like a signal through the years.

¹⁵ Schoenberg, *Libretto for A Survivor from Warsaw* (New York: Boelke-Bomart, 1949).

¹⁶ Although many theories about what inspired Schoenberg's libretto exist, Michael Strasser's study of the composer's correspondence with Chochem offers the only concrete evidence of influence. For an account of the exchange, see Michael Strasser, "A *Survivor from Warsaw* as Personal Parable," *Music & Letters* 76 (1995): 52–63.

¹⁷ Corinne Chochem to Arnold Schoenberg, 2 April 1947, as quoted in Strasser, "Personal Parable," 52. Chochem sent only the English translation by Aaron Kramer (although she had both Hebrew and Yiddish available), because she assumed that Schoenberg would only be interested in the English version.

This song was written with our blood and not with lead:
 It's not a song that birds sing overhead.
 It was a people, among toppling barricades,
 That sang this song of ours with pistols and grenades.¹⁸

The use of song as a vehicle for protest and self-declaration (“We are here!”) captured Schoenberg’s attention; in a letter of 20 April 1947, he wrote to Chochem that he “plan[ned] to make it this scene—which you [Chochem] described—in the Warsaw Ghetto, how the doomed Jews started singing, before going to die.”¹⁹ Thus at the earliest conceptual stages of *Survivor*’s genesis, Schoenberg consulted historical documents that might inform his representation of the Holocaust both textually and musically. Moreover, his intent to use Glick’s song as the melodic foundation of the cantata suggests that the composer may not have been wedded to a 12-tone realization of the scene.

Later letters reveal that Schoenberg abandoned the idea of devising a historical libretto in favor of crafting a narrative that better fit his notion of the memorial as a personal remembrance. The result was a fairly ahistorical libretto (written in English, although with the sergeant’s text in German and the *Shema Yisroel* in Hebrew) that contains inaccurate information about the Warsaw Ghetto, the most infamous example being the mention of gas chambers, even though none existed there.²⁰ In a letter to Kurt List, Schoenberg admitted that historical veracity was not a priority in the creation of his libretto.

Now, what the text of the *Survivor* means to me: It means at first a warning to all Jews, never to forget what has been done to us, never to forget that even people who did not do it themselves, agreed with them and many of them found it necessary to treat us this way. We should never forget this, even if such things have not been done in the manner in which I describe in the *Survivor*. This does not matter. The main thing is, that I saw it in my imagination.²¹

Schoenberg’s letter reinforces two crucial points regarding memory in *Survivor*. First, remembrance (or memory) was the principal textual

¹⁸ Translation from the Yiddish by Aaron Kramer.

¹⁹ Arnold Schoenberg to Corinne Chochem, 20 April 1947, as quoted in Strasser, “Personal Parable,” 52.

²⁰ David Schiller has argued that Schoenberg conflated two separate events in the history of the Warsaw Ghetto: the Great Liquidation of 1942 and the Ghetto Revolt of 1943. See Schiller, *Bloch, Schoenberg, Bernstein*, 96.

²¹ Arnold Schoenberg to Kurt List, 1 November 1948, as reprinted 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, Calif.: Belmont Music Publishers, 1988), 105.

idea of the cantata as well as its primary goal as an artistic work. Schoenberg intended *Survivor* not only to enact memory but also to produce it. Second, his departure from historical sources allowed him the freedom to create an imagined account that satisfied his own aesthetic beliefs and to coordinate all parameters of musical and textual expression.

This coordination is evident in sketches for the libretto, which closely align with musical processes; from the earliest stages of the work's conception, musical and textual ideas were interrelated. One particular sketch (Ta) preserves an early draft of the libretto, albeit in German, that includes the Feldwebel's dialogue and several distinctive phrases uttered by the narrator. Closer inspection of the sketch reveals that it is less concerned with mapping the textual narrative than with probing or attempting to articulate the sonic possibilities of the narrator's experience.²² It describes sounds, musical motives, and dialogue that correspond to measures 61–99 in the completed score:

Feldwebel: Achtung!! Stillgestanden! Na wird's mal, oder soll ich mit'm Gewehrkolben ein bisschen nach helfen? Na gut, wenn ihr nicht ruhig seid und still steht, so müsst ihr's wieder mal zu fühlen bekommen.

|: Stöhnen, Wehklagen, Ruhe—angstvolle :| Stille und Spannung.
Feldwebel: Abzählen!

|: man hört 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5–6 dann schneller, aufgeregter: 7 – 8 – 9 – 10– 11 das schliesslich in ein "Stampfendes." Lärm im Orchester übergeht :| welches zu einem großen fortissimo anschwillt. Es bricht Mitten drin beginnen Männerstimmen unisono das "Shema Yisroel."²³

[Sergeant: Attention!! Stand still! Is this going to work, or should I help you a little bit with my riflebutt? Very well, if you can't remain quiet and still, then you'll have to feel it again. Groaning, moaning, quiet – fearful silence and tension. Sergeant: Count them! One hears 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5–6 then faster, more excitedly: 7 – 8 – 9 – 10– 11 that finally [breaks] into a stampede. Noise in the orchestra overcomes and swells to a large fortissimo. It breaks[.] In the middle of it the men's voices in unison begin the *Shema Yisroel*.]

This is a set-design for the mental landscape of *Survivor*, a textual rendering of the musical memory that the narrator will experience and then witness aloud. Some text from Ta, including the Feldwebel's dialogue, appears verbatim in the completed libretto, whereas other text

²² This article uses the sketch labeling system provided in *Arnold Schönberg: Sämtliche Werke, Abteilung V, Chorwerke II: Kritischer Bericht, Skizzen, Fragment, Reihe B, Band 19*, ed. Christian Martin Schmidt (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne, 1977).

²³ The text has been grouped and punctuation added for clarity.

appears to have inspired some of the fragmented sensory observations relayed by the narrator during his re-experiencing of the moment.²⁴

At some point during the creative process, Schoenberg deviated further from his original plan and recast the *Survivor's* tale not as a real-time drama but as a Holocaust testimony, a decision that highlighted memory as a primary topic within the work. Schoenberg drafted the possibilities for his introspective prologue in a second sketch of the text (Tb), which foreshadows several phrases found in the final libretto.

I cannot remember [everything] all that happened the [last] day before I lived underground, in the sewers of Warsaw. [I must have been uncons] I do not know how I [came] got there—I must have been unconscious most of the time. The day began as usual. Reveille, when it still was dark! Get out!²⁵

In Sketch Tb, Schoenberg conceives of memory as something that derives from a sense of the whole (“all that happened”) and builds on certain details that escape from the unconscious into the conscious mind. He appears to encode this understanding of memory into the mimetic dialogue between *Survivor's* textual and musical events. In the final score, a slightly revised version of the monologue appears after an instrumental introduction (mm. 1–12) that parallels the music accompanying the final assault on the Jews (mm. 61–80; see Table 1).²⁶

In the introduction, the instrumental motives function as an unconscious memory for the narrator, who admits that he “cannot remember” nor clearly associate the musical fragments with his own lived experience, in part because he is experiencing these signifying motives for the first time. When the opening fanfare repeats in measure 25, the start of the recollection proper, its musical reappearance fosters a conscious remembrance for the narrator, who promptly names it as a textual component of his narrative (“Reveille”). His unconscious mind tapped, he now freely associates words and events with motives that were originally purely musical, allowing us to interpret the instrumental introduction as an unconscious (musical) memory that prompts his conscious (textual) narrative in measure 25.

²⁴ For example, in Ta, Schoenberg writes, “Stöhnen, Wehklagen, Ruhe—angstvolle. Stille und Spannung,” which may correlate with the English portion of the libretto, in which he remarks, “It was painful to hear the groaning and moaning . . . It had become very still—fear and pain.”

²⁵ Words appearing in brackets are those that Schoenberg deleted during the composition of the draft.

²⁶ The recapitulation of these motives in *Survivor* has been discussed in the literature, including Schmidt, “Schönbergs Kantate *Ein Überlebender aus Warschau*, Op. 46” and Föllmi, “I Cannot Remember Ev'rything.”

TABLE 1

Motivic recapitulation in *Survivor*, measures 1–25 and 60–80

Measure	Motive	Narrative Occurrence
1–3	Fanfare	[untexted]
2–6	Maj. 7 th Tremolos	[untexted]
7	Flute Trills	[untexted]
8–10	[qn tied to four 16th notes]	[untexted]
19–20	<i>Shema Yisroel</i> (horn)	<i>the old prayer, the forgotten creed!</i>
25	Fanfare	<i>Reveille! When it was still dark . . .</i>
[. . .]		
61–63	Fanfare	Nazis: “Abzählen!”
63–66	Maj. 7 th Tremolos	First Count of the Victims
66	Flute Trill	“Achtung!”
67–70	[qn tied to four 16th notes]	“How many do I need to send to the Gas chambers?”
80–90	<i>Shema Yisroel</i> (choir)	. . . they began to sing the <i>Shema Yisroel</i>

This process of translation represents the narrator’s mnemonic experience, portrayed as a psychosonic phenomenon in which musical memories are sensed and then articulated in spoken text. This process imbues the cantata with an inherent sense of duplication and mimesis (the critique most commonly levied against *Survivor* by its detractors) in that the narrator’s conscious mind realizes memories already stored in the unconscious and attempts to render this mental soundscape in words. But such repetition is central to the psychological dramaturgy of *Survivor*, which captures the difficulty that an individual encounters when attempting to translate a traumatic experience into language—the burden of describing the unimaginable. As a result, the narrator in *Survivor* transcends his role as a fictional protagonist, a mere character in the work, and becomes the cantata’s own internal witness and author—one who “creates from a vision of the whole” episodes that “function in a specific way, move, change—in short, live” according to the laws of the “whole, which [is] conceived unconsciously.”²⁷

The presence of two authors in *Survivor*—Schoenberg and the narrator—raises an interesting interpretive possibility. If the aging

²⁷ Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea and the Logic, Technique and Art of Its Presentation*, ed. Patricia Carpenter and Severine Neff (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1995), 126–27.

composer had conceived of the narrator as an author akin to himself, then the prospect that Schoenberg embedded his own creative process and ideas about memory into the narrator's soliloquy becomes an intriguing avenue for inquiry. One significant revision that occurred between sketch Tb and the final draft of the libretto drips with obvious self-reference and self-identification: Schoenberg's addition of the phrase "I remember only the grandiose moment when they all started to sing, as if prearranged, the old prayer."²⁸ The "grandiose moment" that is fully remembered is the *Shema Yisroel*, the only moment in the work when the 12-tone series is presented as a complete melody in prime form. Moreover, this inspired singing strikes the narrator as "pre-arranged," a nod to the 12-tone technique and its various preconceived transformations. Although some studies have interpreted this phrase as evidence of Schoenberg's rededication to his Jewish faith and an overt reference to the dodecaphonic setting of *Survivor*, it might also be interpreted as further evidence of the close relationship between the textual and musical ideas of the work. Here the act of conscious memory is associated with the 12-tone source row of the cantata, an approach that suggests Schoenberg "submerged [technical craft] and made one and indivisible the content of the work"—memory as both a textual and musical idea.²⁹

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Memory and the Musical Idea: Evidence from Schoenberg's Writings

In his writings on the musical idea, Schoenberg often turned to memory as a helpful metaphor for how the human mind comprehends musical ideas. One primary repository for Schoenberg's discussion of musical memory is the *Gedanke* Manuscripts, a series of 12 unpublished essays written over the course of 13 years, in which Schoenberg's association of memory not only with human logic but also the musical idea reaches an apex. The connection between music and memory was certainly not exclusive to the GMS; indeed, some of the terms that Schoenberg would later associate with mnemonic procedures appear in earlier manuscripts and letters, suggesting a long gestation for the concept. For example, in *Zusammenhang, Kontrapunkt, Instrumentation, Formenlehre*, a manuscript that Schoenberg wrote in conjunction with his early hexachordal compositions such as *Die Jakobsleiter*, Schoenberg briefly evoked memory in a section concerning coherence and comprehensibility: "the presupposition for [a] recognition of similarity is the

²⁸ Arnold Schoenberg, Libretto to *A Survivor from Warsaw*.

²⁹ The quote derives from Schoenberg's own program notes for his *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, op. 16, completed in 1909 and premiered in 1912.

capacity of memory: to remember the new and old components.”³⁰ In a 1923 letter to Josef Hauer, Schoenberg further emphasized the psychological dimension of musical composition: “Behind the term ‘logical’ there is, for me, a complex that says: logic—human thinking—human music—human ideas of nature and law and so forth.”³¹ The connective lines Schoenberg drew between each sequential item suggest the inextricable connection between human thought and musical composition. As he later wrote in September 1936, a musical composition was bound up in the logical processes of its author in that a musical work “produced from a germ would be human activity—even if that germ were to grow by and of itself.”³²

Schoenberg strengthened the correlation between human thought and musical logic in GMS 6 (1931). One passage is particularly valuable because it specifically extends the humanist underpinnings of Schoenberg’s compositional philosophy to his concept of the musical idea:

Composing is: *thinking in tones and rhythms*. Every piece is the *presentation of a musical idea*. Musical thinking is subject to the *laws and conditions of all our other thinking*. . . . All thinking consists essentially in *bringing things* (concepts, etc.) into *relationship with each other*. An idea is the production of a relationship between things otherwise having no *relationship* to one another. Thinking, therefore, searches out *the relationships* between things.³³

Such cognitive metaphors were common in those manuscripts and essays dedicated to the topic of the musical idea, whose presentation Schoenberg asserted was rooted in the “logical, metaphysical, and psychological.”³⁴

According to the composer, memory is also central to understanding a musical work. In the essay “New Music: My Music (1930),” Schoenberg argues that “the first precondition for understanding is . . . memory. . . . But the precondition of memory is recognition. . . . If a [musical] figure is . . . so lacking in character . . . or so complicated, that I cannot recognize it and remember it, then correct understanding

³⁰ Most of Schoenberg’s comments relating to recognition (*Erkennen*) and memory in this manuscript appear in the *Zusammenhang* (coherence) section. See Schoenberg, *Coherence, Counterpoint, Instrumentation, Instruction in Form*, trans. Charlotte M. Cross and Severine Neff (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1994), especially 13–17.

³¹ Arnold Schoenberg to Josef Hauer, 7 December 1923, reprinted in *Letters*, ed. Erwin Stein, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), 106.

³² Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea*, 109. This passage appears in GMS 10 and is dated to the end of September 1936.

³³ Schoenberg, GMS 6 (1931), as reprinted in *The Musical Idea*, 370.

³⁴ Schoenberg, *Coherence, Counterpoint, Instrumentation, Instruction in Form*, 4.

of all that follows . . . is impossible.”³⁵ He notes that repetition facilitates comprehension of a musical idea by creating the proper precondition for memory: *Erkennen* (recognition). Later in the essay he cautions that “the harmful effect of non-recall [is that] one does not know what is being talked about” and endorses careful repetition as a preferred method of communicating a musical idea to an audience.³⁶

Likewise in GMS 10 (1934), a textbook he had tentatively titled “The Musical Idea and the Logic, Technique, and Art of Its Presentation,” Schoenberg describes how memory functions as a psychological phenomenon. “Understanding [*Verstehen*] is based on remembering [*Merken*]. Remembering is based on the ability to retain an impression and to recall it to consciousness voluntarily or involuntarily.”³⁷ In an attempt to avoid general psychological commentary, he began to apply the concepts to musical perception, commenting that “we cannot understand something whose components we have not remembered [*gemerkt*]. . . . In music, the repetitions of certain of the smallest parts (motives, gestalten, phrases) primarily make possible the perception of these small parts as belonging together.” Comprehension, he concludes, relies on three primary actions—repetition, *Erkennen*, and *Wiedererkennen* (re-recognition).

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To distinguish *Erkennen* from *Wiedererkennen*, Schoenberg provides each with its own individual analysis and metaphors. In his description of *Erkennen*, he draws an analogy between how the human mind recognizes and understands objects and how the musical mind perceives the musical idea.

Every object is a composite and hence breaks down into parts. Thus, an object can be recognized as a whole (that is, by the cohesion and effect of its components), or by a few or many of its parts. For example, I can recognize a soldier by his uniform without knowing details—further details—about him. Then I shall observe only that he is a soldier. If, in addition, I see his rank or regimental insignias, or if I see his face, then I can also observe which soldier he is.³⁸

Schoenberg argues that familiarity with the whole (the soldier or the musical idea) enables it to be identified by its smallest details; one may then make finer distinctions based on additional information or attributes. The presence of the whole is not required to achieve recognition if its details create associations that bespeak the whole.

³⁵ Schoenberg, “New Music: My Music (1930),” in *Style and Idea*, 103.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 104.

³⁷ Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea*, 131.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 145.

Wiedererkennen is the complementary process to *Erkennen* whereby repeated exposure to an object allows it to be distinguished from other like elements. To illustrate his point, Schoenberg refers to the biological distinction between different species of cats:

The ability to recognize depends very largely upon familiarity with related, similar, or like objects. Anyone familiar with only a cat will take a tiger, leopard, panther, [or] lynx for an unusually large cat—or for a tall tale. Consequently in many ways recognition is re-recognition.³⁹

In this example, repeated exposure (*Wiedererkennen*) creates a familiarity with the category of “cat,” after which one is able to identify as “cat” all those things that bear a likeness to the genus while also perceiving differences among species. Schoenberg suggests that the same process applies to comprehension of the musical idea. Once familiar with the musical idea, listeners can recognize its expression in minute details of a piece and classify those details as belonging to the larger species of *Gedanke*. Establishing this second level of perception also allows for more nuanced listening, in that the audience could re-recognize the presence of established musical elements while simultaneously recognizing for the first time their new forms and modes of presentation.

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Schoenberg’s coupling of *Erkennen* with a new concept, *Wiedererkennen*, suggests that the composer’s theory of musical memory had developed and expanded in the four-year period between “New Music: My Music” and GMS 10. In the latter *Erkennen* is again identified as the foundation of human and musical memory, but the principle of *Wiedererkennen* recognizes that repetition may prompt subsequent encounters with familiar musical material. “In many ways,” Schoenberg contends, “recognition is re-recognition. This is so even when a (relatively) new object is involved whose (old) constituent elements are familiar and can be recognized.”⁴⁰ Posited between these two concepts is a final requisite action—retention—which allows the brain to hold impressions for the purpose of re-recognition; in GMS 10 Schoenberg argues that musical impressions are indelible but must be awakened through the process of *Wiedererkennen*. “It might also be conceivable,” he argues, “that a brain is so predisposed or trained as to be able to store certain series of impressions as a series, threaded on a string, so to speak, and that it can through this means locate them at any time and use them in the thought process.”⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 131.

As a complement to these explanations Schoenberg attempted to represent graphically how these processes operate in practice. He drew a circle, traced its course, and explained that “Recognition [*Erkennen*] is thus based on experience [*Erfahrung*] and on comparison [*Vergleichung*]. This is a circle: For experience and comparison are not possible without recollection [*Gedächtnis*].”⁴² Such a path seems to encompass all of the aforementioned elements of musical memory—recognition, retention, repetition, and re-recognition—and demonstrates how materials progress from initial recognition to musical suppression. These stored impressions may arise later and be re-recognized via a comparative process that accesses the memory-store and remembers past experiences. In the manuscript, Schoenberg crossed out this cyclical diagram, an unexplained editorial decision with several possible motivations. First, he may have reconsidered the placement of such a diagram in the manuscript, deleting it from the first chapter solely on the basis of location. Second, Schoenberg might have abandoned the mnemonic principles behind the diagram, although this seems less plausible since he did not delete the accompanying text and continued to refer to *Erkennen* and *Wiedererkennen* in later sections of the manuscript. More likely, the composer recognized that the diagram limited the manner in which *Erkennen* and *Wiedererkennen* could operate, because *Erkennen* would always trace the circle towards *Wiedererkennen*. The cycle does not account for other potential scenarios, such as impressions that are recognized but then permanently suppressed, never to be re-recognized.

Schoenberg’s interest in musical memory did not subside in the 1940s but rather found expression in both textual and musical forms. During this time his theories of the musical idea also became increasingly tied to his concern for his audience, by whom he felt generally misunderstood and unappreciated.⁴³ In “Criteria for the Evaluation of Music” (1946), he identifies several means of improving the reception of his works, one of which centered on providing listeners with memorable musical moments: “The role of memory in music evaluation is

⁴² Ibid., 145.

⁴³ This anxiety about his status only increased after his 1933 emigration to the United States, where he struggled to assimilate, earn a living, and improve his English. In the 1940s, Schoenberg displayed significant worry as to whether his corpus would be embraced and remembered by his audience, a concern that caused him to contemplate how American listeners understood his music. In “Criteria for the Evaluation of Music” (1946), he presents Schubert and Schumann as historical precedents of composers who catered to the tastes of their audience while maintaining their artistic integrity. Such anxiety found its way into his private letters, including a letter to Hans Rosbaud dated 12 May 1947 in which he admitted that he wished people “should know my tunes and whistle them.” See Schoenberg, *Letters*, 243.

more important than most people realize. It is perhaps true that one starts to understand a piece only when one can remember it at least partially. But memory must be nursed and given an opportunity to function.”⁴⁴ The following year Schoenberg authored “Brahms the Progressive,” again naming memory as a precondition of musical comprehension and listing repetition among those elements that foster recognition.⁴⁵ Thus in the 1940s memory becomes entangled with certain extramusical concerns, chiefly encouraging audience involvement with and comprehension of his musical techniques.

Extramusical and textual programs for instrumental works provide another means by which Schoenberg’s interest in musical memory might be measured. Recently Michael Cherlin investigated a potential link between the musical language of the String Trio, op. 45 (1946) and Schoenberg’s own description of a near-death experience he suffered in conjunction with a severe heart attack.⁴⁶ The composer confided in Leonard Stein that his “almost fatality” had inspired the String Trio’s musical language, a quasi-program that Stein later recounted to Walter Bailey:

Schoenberg explained the many juxtapositions of the unlike material within the Trio as reflections of the delirium which the composer suffered during parts of his illness. Thus, the seemingly fragmentary nature of the Trio’s material represents the experience of time and events as perceived from a semiconscious or highly sedated state. These unusual juxtapositions also represent the alternate phases of “pain and suffering” and “peace and repose” that Schoenberg experienced.⁴⁷

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Stein also recalled that Schoenberg described the String Trio’s recapitulation as his “going back and reliving [that portion of his life represented in the first section] with the calmness and perspective of good health.”⁴⁸

From these anecdotes Cherlin abstracted three types of mnemonic language at play in the String Trio. The first is fragmentary memory, in which the juxtaposition of contrasting material parallels the fractured nature of memory, a device manifest in the String Trio’s “abrupt and

⁴⁴ Schoenberg, “Criteria for the Evaluation of Music (1946),” in *Style and Idea*, 127.

⁴⁵ Schoenberg, “Brahms the Progressive (1947),” in *Style and Idea*, 399.

⁴⁶ Michael Cherlin, “Memory and Rhetorical Trope in Schoenberg’s String Trio,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51 (1998): 559–602. Schoenberg suffered the heart attack on 2 August 1946.

⁴⁷ Walter Bailey, *Programmatic Elements in the Works of Schoenberg: Studies in Musicology* 74 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1984), 151–52, as cited in Cherlin, “Memory and Rhetorical Trope,” 558.

⁴⁸ As cited in Cherlin, “Memory and Rhetorical Trope,” 562.

striking changes of texture and affect” as well as the interruption and truncation of its musical phrases.⁴⁹ The second involves formal expressions of memory via recapitulatory forms, which encourages listeners to perceive “a network of time spans, musical events, and their transformations as constituting a musical experience.”⁵⁰ The third is representational memory, which centers on the translation of the human experience of memory into musical discourse and requires explicit proof of the association, as with Schoenberg’s confession to Stein. In the case of the String Trio, the connection with human memory was never made available to the audience; Schoenberg suppressed its textual idea in favor of a more absolute musical product that made no overt allusions to the inspiration behind its musical ideas.

All of these forms of musical memory also appear in *Survivor*, which was written a mere year after the String Trio; but Schoenberg’s writings on musical memory in the GMS suggest that mnemonic principles might have also implicated a parameter not fully considered by Cherlin in his study: the 12-tone technique. Such a revelation should not be surprising, given Dahlhaus’s observation that the texts of the later works (like *Survivor*) appear to play a fundamental role in their musical creation, aiding or even determining the presentation of the musical idea.⁵¹ Schoenberg himself confirms this relationship in GMS 10, in which he identifies “text, character, program, and mood” as potential means of determining or directing musical forms and ensuring total coherence in a musical work.⁵² Such observations, coupled with *Survivor*’s overt references to traumatic recollection in its libretto, inspire the search for places where mnemonic procedures influence its dodecaphonic structure. The following analysis relies on references to memory from GMS 10 to reveal mnemonic structures within *Survivor* and provide an analytical model by which we might assign meaning to its 12-tone technique.

Memory as Musical Method: Recall and Retention in Survivor

Schoenberg prefaces his discussion of *Erkennen* and *Wiedererkennen* with the following comment: “Remembering is based on the ability to retain an impression and recall it to consciousness voluntarily or involuntarily.”⁵³ For Schoenberg, repetition and storage of the musical idea

⁴⁹ Ibid., 559.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 562.

⁵¹ Carl Dahlhaus, “Schoenberg and Program Music,” in *Schoenberg and the New Music*, 167.

⁵² Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea*, 287.

⁵³ Ibid., 131.

are key to musical memory; accordingly, my mnemonic interpretation of 12-tone processes in *Survivor* locates instances of both musical recall and retention. Recollective processes, including repetition at the micro- (motivic) and macrolevels (row areas) of the composition, occur throughout *Survivor* and are interrupted by periods of musical suppression, creating the conditions for *Wiedererkennen*. These mnemonic principles not only provide a means of interpreting *Survivor*'s 12-tone technique but also integrate a discussion of the rows with a broader hermeneutical consideration of memory and meaning in the Holocaust cantata.⁵⁴ Before examining how *Survivor*'s musical structure exhibits mnemonic patterning, a description of the source row is appropriate.

A Survivor from Warsaw is a 12-tone piece that derives both harmonic and melodic material from a pre-composed row (P_6) and its various transformations.⁵⁵ Throughout *Survivor*, Schoenberg employs hexachordal combinatoriality to avoid progressing through an entire row, completing it instead with its inversion beginning on the pitch five semitones higher (i.e. P_6 and I_{11}). The intervallic content of the first hexachord of the row displays a high degree of symmetry. Schoenberg arranges the pitches in such a manner that intervals of the same interval class (ic) either balance the overall structure of the hexachord or create smaller, symmetrical subsets within it. For example, the minor second (ic₁) appears at both ends of the first hexachord. Their contour, however, is mirrored: the initial semitone ascends, the latter descends. The major third (ic₄) also figures prominently in the row, in which two successive statements (between ordinals 3–4 and 4–5) create an augmented triad. Because of the symmetrical nature of the augmented triad, any transposition of the row or its inversion by a degree of four will result in invariance at ordinals three, four, and five of the hexachord. There are, therefore, four distinct augmented triads generated by the first hexachord of Schoenberg's row and its inversions: {0,4,8}; {1,5,9}; {2,6,T}; and {3,7,E}.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Within the literature, Schiller's analysis acknowledges *Survivor*'s 12-tone structure, but his analysis centers more on motivic invariance than large-scale row recapitulation. Schmidt also considers the 12-tone rows, but does not link them to textual meaning within the cantata. Instead, he reads the cantata as an expression of Schoenberg's compositional development from aphorism to dodecaphony. As mentioned earlier, Föllmi is perhaps the most dismissive of the 12-tone rows.

⁵⁵ I categorize all rows by their opening pitch. The first row of *Survivor* is therefore P_6 , which translates to the prime-form row beginning on $F\sharp$. Retrograde and retrograde-inversional forms are identified by their ending pitch. For example, R_2 is the retrograde form ending on D.

⁵⁶ Curly brackets denote unordered sets, such that {0,4,8} denotes the following three possibilities: {C, E, G \sharp }, {E, G \sharp , C}, and {G \sharp , C, E}.

TABLE 2

Survivor's source row (P_6) and all possible permutations with {0,4,8} invariant chords highlighted

P6	6	7	0	8	4	3	T	1	9	2	5	E
	5	6	E	7	3	2	9	0	8	1	4	T
	0	1	6	2	T	9	4	7	3	8	E	5
	4	5	T	6	2	1	8	E	7	0	3	9
	8	9	2	T	6	5	0	3	E	4	7	1
	9	T	3	E	7	6	1	4	0	5	8	2
	2	3	8	4	0	E	6	9	5	T	1	7
	E	0	5	1	9	8	3	6	2	7	T	4
	3	4	9	5	1	0	7	T	6	E	2	8
	T	E	4	0	8	7	2	5	1	6	9	3
	7	8	1	9	5	4	E	2	T	3	6	0
	1	2	7	3	E	T	5	8	4	9	0	6

Recall

Within *Survivor*, Schoenberg repeats certain rows to such an extent that they become stable or preferred material with the work. David Lewin notes that row repetition constitutes one method by which Schoenberg determined musical structure in his later dodecapronic works, an approach he considered almost “quasi-tonal” in application.⁵⁷ For Lewin, the resulting “stable row areas” are analogous to keys within the tonal system and exhibit the following two criteria: 1) sustained duration of the row must be achieved; and 2) distinctive motives associated with the row’s intervallic material must be created. Rows in a work that do not meet the above criteria generally serve as modulatory passages in which pivot rows facilitate the progression from one stable section to the next or as moments of prolongation.⁵⁸ Two letters from Schoenberg to René Leibowitz confirm that Schoenberg had loosened his restriction on “tonal resemblances” in the years immediately preceding *Survivor's* composition. On 1 October 1945, he wrote, “I would not consider the danger of resembling tonality as tragically as formerly. . . . The main purpose of the ‘row’ is to unify the motivic material and to

⁵⁷ See also Andreas Jacob, “Das Verständnis von Tonalität in Arnold Schönbergs theoretischen Schriften,” *Musiktheorie* 15 (2000): 3–18.

⁵⁸ David Lewin, “Inversional Balance as an Organizing Force in Schoenberg’s Music and Thought,” *Perspectives of New Music* 6 (1968): 1–21.

enhance the logic of simultaneously sounding tones.”⁵⁹ On 4 July 1947, a month before *Survivor's* composition, Schoenberg explained his position further:

As regards hints of a tonality and intermixing of consonant triads one must remember that the main purpose of twelve-tone composition is: production of coherence through the use of a unifying succession of tones which should function at least like a motive. Thus, the organizational efficiency of the harmony should be replaced. It was not my purpose to write dissonant music, but to include dissonance in a logical manner without reference to the treatment of the classics.⁶⁰

Although his comments justify the doubling of octaves and the use of tonal-sounding progressions, the letters indicate a broader acceptance of tonal processes within dodecaphonic music.

These letters offer a context for the tonal treatment of the 12-tone rows in *Survivor*, in which three rows (P_6 , P_2 , P_{10}) emerge as significant structural markers by virtue of their articulated repetition throughout the cantata. In *Survivor's* introduction, Schoenberg presents these three prime rows—all of which share the same $\{0,4,8\}$ augmented triad, and two of which provide the materials for prominent motives that repeat at key structural junctures, such as the fanfare (opening tetrachord of P_6) and the *Shema Yisroel* (opening hexachord of P_{10}).⁶¹ As the narrator begins his recollection proper (m. 25), Schoenberg repeats the fanfare motive and solidly establishes P_6-I_{11} as the controlling row of this section. The only exception to this row saturation occurs in measures 34–38, in which a slight deviation to P_9 functions less as a new row area and more as a prolongation of P_6 .⁶² Schoenberg sustains the $\{0,4,8\}$ trichord for the next nine measures (mm. 38–46), where it functions as a motto in the xylophone as well as a pedal point in the violas. In this manner, *Survivor's* opening 47 measures center primarily on P_6 , its distinguishing motives, and its $\{0,4,8\}$ trichord.

⁵⁹ Arnold Schoenberg to René Leibowitz, 1 October 1945, in *Letters*, 236.

⁶⁰ Arnold Schoenberg to René Leibowitz, 4 July 1947, in *Letters*, 247.

⁶¹ It is possible to interpret measure five as either an expression of I_2 coupled with a fragmented I_{11} or a fragmented P_6 coupled with I_{11} . The rows I_2 and P_6 share the $\{0,4,8\}$ augmented triad, and a clear expression of I_2 occurs prior to the statement of P_{10} in measure 7. Schoenberg seems to be playing with the affinities between those rows that share the $\{0,4,8\}$ augmented triad in these opening measures. I have chosen to read measure 5 as an expression of a fragmented P_6 for two reasons. First, P_6 plays a greater structural role throughout the rest of *Survivor*. Second, the aesthetic of fragmentation seems pivotal to Schoenberg's treatment of the rows and would be consistent with his treatment of P_6 in this measure.

⁶² Schoenberg's use of P_9 here seems predicated on pitch affinities between it and P_6 . Both share the $F\sharp$ and G, although P_6 begins with these pitches (ascending), while P_9 ends with them (descending), and the $\{3,7,E\}$ trichord of P_9 easily resolves to $\{0,4,8\}$ by a transposition of +1.

Measure 47 signals a shift to a new section defined by P_2 and its combinatorial complement, I_7 . Schoenberg solidifies the new row area by presenting I_7 as a melody in the cellos, signifying the first occurrence of the entire 12-tone series melodically, albeit in inversion. A second melody based on the first hexachord of R_2 and accompanied harmonically by the second hexachord of R_2 occurs in measures 49–50. Despite their brevity, these measures solidly establish a stable row area (P_2-I_7); no other row contributes to the section's harmonic and melodic material.

Survivor's conclusion is characterized by dramatic shifts in row modulation, texture, and dynamics. Rhythmic activity first increases in measures 62–70, during which Schoenberg shifts rapidly from $P_{10}-I_3$ to P_2-I_7 , finally coming to rest on I_4 . Thereafter the full ensemble begins an eight-measure crescendo in which an ascending semitone sequence moves through all 12 transpositions of the row and their inversions. Unable to sustain its own velocity, *Survivor* erupts into the singing of the *Shema Yisroel* in a dramatic change of texture (spoken vs. sung) and row manifestation (motivic vs. linear 12-tone melodies). The *Shema Yisroel* itself consists of five complete melodic 12-tone series derived from the opening stable row areas: P_{10} , I_3 , P_2 , RI_7 , P_6 (first hexachord only).

Survivor's row structure, which creates a ternary form, displays several affinities with the mental processes Schoenberg outlined in his essays on musical mnemonics. The opening 46 measures (A) introduce the work's dominant rows (P_6 and P_{10}) and prominent motives and subjects them to constant repetition in order to facilitate their recognition throughout the piece. This musical process may be compared to the mental process of *Erkennen*, in which a person comes to recognize an object and identify its pertinent qualities through repeated exposure. In measures 47–53 (B), Schoenberg makes three musical decisions that distinguish this section from the others in such fashion as might be equated with the narrator's memory gap. First, Schoenberg derives this section's melodies from both hexachords of I_7 and the first hexachord of R_2 . Thus, two-thirds of the melodic material consists of hexachords not heard before now. (In the opening, Schoenberg used only first hexachords of prime-form rows.) There are also fewer expressions of the augmented triad, as the first hexachords of the retrogrades do not contain the invariant triad. Second, in the nine measures preceding section three, Schoenberg foreshadows the approaching suppression (or storage) by fragmenting P_6 until only its augmented triad remains, an effect that creates row ambiguity directly preceding measure 47. Third, this disintegration of the row is complemented by a reduction of the ensemble to a sparse texture that gives the impression of a musical withdrawal. This retreat from the musical material associated with the

Erkennen represents a musical suppression, which then gives way to the work's conclusion (A'), in which the *Erkennen* rows and motives reappear, initiating the process of *Wiedererkennen*.

Text also participates in these recollective articulations of *Erkennen* and *Wiedererkennen*. The phrase "I must have been unconscious," first uttered in the *Erkennen* of section A, returns in measure 54 at the very onset of the *Wiedererkennen*. Also, the use of German—a striking textual motive, contrasting with the narrator's broken English—occurs in the *Erkennen* and *Wiedererkennen*, but not during the musical suppression of measures 47–53. When the music abandons the material of the *Erkennen* in section B, the narrator himself loses his own memory of the preceding events and experiences a blackout. Thus textual and musical signs seem to support an interpretation of the piece as based on mnemonic recall, whether as the subject of the narrator's traumatic memory or the structural basis of the musical process.

Retention

As Schoenberg stipulated, memory relies not only on the recollection of an image but also its retention, suggesting that some impressions are never completely forgotten but called forth in reaction to certain stimuli or details. For example, in the text of *Survivor*, the narrator admits that he cannot remember everything but does remember the singing of the *Shema Yisroel*. The recollection of this one moment then leads to his remembrance of the events leading up to the singing of the prayer. Put another way, the remembrance of one small event within the narrative facilitates (or even generates) the rest of the memory. Schoenberg argued that a similar process is true for 12-tone music: Once the musical idea has been apprehended, the listener can be reminded of it when confronted by its expression in the smallest details of the piece.

One such detail within *Survivor* is the augmented triad, which assumes a pivotal sonic role insofar as it appears in every manifestation of the row owing to invariance at ordinals 3–5. This causes realizations of the augmented triad to pervade *Survivor* melodically and harmonically because every row (and its hexachordal combination) contains one of its four types. Repetition of the augmented triad throughout the piece suggests that Schoenberg considered this chord to be *Survivor's* expression of the musical idea and therefore the component of the work subject to mnemonic treatment. In *Survivor*, the augmented triad finds expression in both smaller motives as well as the larger architecture of the piece, an observation that further supports a mnemonic interpretation of its 12-tone structure. Its reflection at both the micro- and

macrolevels constitutes the retention of the musical idea by the piece, as it is continually present. This retention, in turn, facilitates the process of recollection, in that the idea is never completely absent but merely obscured by fragmentation and defamiliarization.

The harmonic role of the augmented triad in *Survivor* has received ample attention from scholars because it often connects distinct sections of the piece. Christian Martin Schmidt discussed Schoenberg's use of the augmented triad at length and noted that it often functions as a "harmonic pedal" that holds together longer stretches of music.⁶³ As an example, he points to its use in measures 38–46, where it eases a transition between P_6 and P_2 , transpositions of the row that share the same augmented triad {0,4,8}. In other sections Schoenberg modulates through the four augmented triads via sequential transpositions of +1 until returning to the initial pitch content (generally the {0,4,8} trichord), as is seen in the prolongation of P_6 in measures 34–38 and the final row sequence in measures 71–80.⁶⁴ Thus the augmented triad participates directly in harmonic transitions between row areas and creates continuity as well as unity between contrasting musical sections. In addition, all melodic presentations of the 12-tone series obviously contain one or more versions of the augmented triad.

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In measures 11 and 51, Schoenberg seems to hint at the importance of this symmetrical trichord by generating melodic and harmonic material solely from the four augmented triads, which when combined comprise all 12 pitches. Harmonically the trombones provide stability by sustaining the {0,4,8} trichord throughout the measure. The upper winds play a scurrying 16th-note passage that alternates between what appear at first glance to be descending and ascending semitones. Upon further inspection, however, it becomes clear that Schoenberg derived these semitones from the {2,6,T} trichord. Additionally, the violins repeat three descending minor sevenths that result from the overlapping of the final two augmented triads: {1,5,9} and {3,7,E}.

As Beat Föllmi notes, this motive seems specifically linked to memory, appearing at two important moments in the narrative: those points when the narrator admits his own failure to remember and then struggles to reconstruct his memory of the Warsaw Ghetto. Accordingly, Föllmi names this motive *Erinnerung* (memory), because it appears at

⁶³ Schmidt, "Schönbergs Kantate *Ein Überlebender aus Warschau*, Op. 46," 179. "Das schafft die Möglichkeit, den Großterzklang als Akkord zu isolieren und ihn als 'harmonisches Pedal' über eine längere Strecke festzuhalten."

⁶⁴ Schoenberg devoted several sketches for *Survivor* to working out possibilities for the semitone sequence of the augmented triad. His sketch for the final *accelerando* appears on pages 5 and 6 of Source A. See Schmidt, *Chorwerke II*, 75–76 for a reproduction of the sketch.

EXAMPLE 1. Melodic and harmonic expressions of the augmented triad (mm. 11 and 51)

those narratological junctures in which the narrator seems most conscious of his unconsciousness and begins to use single images—such as the *Shema Yisroel*—to provoke deeper entry into his memory-store.⁶⁵ Föllmi fails to note, however, that the motive is derived entirely from the four discrete augmented triads (his focus is on the melodic motive and not its harmonic context), but his insights lend credence to the link between the augmented triad, memory, and ultimately the musical idea.

A final piece of evidence for this close relationship between memory and the augmented triad appears at the structural level of *Survivor* and involves the aforementioned stable row areas: P_2 , P_6 , and P_{10} . The *Shema Yisroel* presents three melodic statements of these rows, which are related to one another by either an ascending or descending major third.⁶⁶ As has been argued, these rows also constitute the stable row material associated with the *Erkennen*, storage, and *Wiedererkennen* sections of the work. *Survivor* travels a harmonic path characterized by the augmented triad (P_6 to R_2 to P_{10}) and, during the *Shema Yisroel*, reverses this progression (P_{10} to P_2 to P_6).

The resulting structure bears a striking resemblance to a rudimentary ternary form (ABA) that begins with the *Erkennen* (P_6 ; initial statement of the *Shema* in P_{10}), leads to an obscuring of the prime $\{0,4,8\}$ rows, and finishes with a recapitulation of the *Shema* in P_{10} that concludes in opening row of P_6 . As Cherlin notes, Schoenberg had

⁶⁵ Föllmi, "I Cannot Remember Ev'rything," 29.

⁶⁶ The prime form rows are separated by melodic appearances of their inversional complements (I_3 and RI_7 respectively), at which point the prime form rows form the harmonic background for the *Shema*.

TABLE 3

Expressions of the augmented triad at various structural levels

Large-Scale Form (mm. 1–80)	P ₆ –I ₁₁ <i>Erkennen</i>	(–4)	R ₂ –RI ₇ “Storage”	(–4)	P ₁₀ <i>Wiedererkennen</i>
<i>Shema Yisroel</i> (mm. 80–99)	P ₁₀ –I ₃	(+4)	P ₂ –RI ₇	(+4)	P ₆
Augmented Triad	C	(+4)	E	(+4)	G [#]

explicitly associated recapitulatory forms with memory, when he described the recapitulation of the String Trio as a process of “going back and reliving” something which had already occurred.⁶⁷ This admission, coupled with the expression of the augmented triad at all levels of *Survivor*’s structure, establishes a mnemonic connection between large-scale form, the choral climax of the work, the intervallic content of the row, and the libretto’s subject. Thus *Survivor* displays the high degree of self-referentiality that Schoenberg considered central to retention, recall, and memory.

Memory and Meaning: A Meditation on the Musical Idea

In 1980 Charlotte Cross explored the relationship of the musical idea to extramusical concepts, arguing that Schoenberg’s *Gedanke* “emerges as a multi-dimensional concept in his writings” owing to the “complex [cultural] framework” that informed and conditioned his rhetoric.⁶⁸ She demonstrates that such contextualization provides depth and meaning to Schoenberg’s aesthetic positions and identifies “three levels of idea” in the composer’s essays. The first level pertains to purely musical processes that result in the restoration of balance, coherence, and totality within a composition. The second defines the musical idea as a form of self-expression, a medium by which the composer, “inspired with [a] new perception of his own human nature and of the nature of the cosmos . . . communicate[s] his intuition to humanity . . . [in the] language of perception: music.”⁶⁹ The third further abstracts the moment of inspiration (*Einfall*) and engages the divine, a position that could reflect Schoenberg’s belief in the “parallel relationship that

⁶⁷ Cherlin, “Memory and Rhetorical Trope,” 562.

⁶⁸ Charlotte Cross, “Three Levels of ‘Idea’ in Schoenberg’s Thought and Writings,” *Current Musicology* 30 (1980): 25.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

exists between music and the cosmos.”⁷⁰ As Schoenberg remarked, a genius “translate[s] into musical terms” the ineffable nature of the universe “so that ordinary men may also perceive it.”⁷¹ Thus when the composer writes a piece of music, he transmits to the audience three levels of idea: 1) a musical execution of his aesthetic philosophy; 2) a personal expression of his own perception; and 3) the divine essence that provides the material for inspiration.

Based on Cross’s observations, one might question whether the augmented triad qualifies as *Survivor’s* musical idea and, if so, ask how it relates to *Survivor’s* message and meaning? As a purely musical element, the augmented triad serves as the controlling figure manifest at motivic, melodic, harmonic, and architectural levels within the work. Its mnemonic presentation, through which it is recognized, suppressed, retained, and then recalled to prominence, also fulfills Schoenberg’s stated desire for balance and resolution of musical unrest. His structuring of *Survivor* around the augmented triad exemplifies the musical continuity and totality that is one of the hallmarks of his 12-tone corpus.

As for the second level, which corresponds to the communication of the composer’s own human nature through musical language, *Survivor’s* textual and musical material offer some potential answers or, at the very least, hermeneutical possibilities. As has been shown, Schoenberg identified a close relationship between human logic and musical logic, suggesting that the presentation of his musical ideas reflects the nature of his own mental processes. *Survivor* thereby provides a window into Schoenberg’s logic and manifests in music his ideas about how memory operates in both the human mind and a musical composition. Moreover, in 1947 Schoenberg’s interest in memory was not only psychological but also personal, as the composer grew increasingly concerned about his own legacy. In a letter written three months before the composition of *Survivor*, Schoenberg lamented to Hans Rosbaud:

Understanding of my music still goes on suffering from the fact that the musicians do not regard me as a normal, common-[place] or garden-[variety] composer who expresses his more or less good and new themes and melodies in a not entirely inadequate musical language—but as a modern dissonant twelve-note experimenter. But there is nothing I long for more intensely . . . than to be taken for a better sort of Tchaikovsky . . . or if anything more, than that people should know my tunes and whistle them.⁷²

⁷⁰ Ibid., 33.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Arnold Schoenberg to Hans Rosbaud, 12 May 1947, in *Letters*, 243.

Survivor's merging of a Holocaust text with a mimetic 12-tone technique seems designed to allow a wider audience access to the 12-tone technique, the innovation that would no longer secure "German [musical] hegemony" but Schoenberg's own legacy "for the next hundred years." *Survivor's* text also raises the issue of self-identity, especially in its use of three languages, German, English, and Hebrew, associated with Schoenberg; his polyglot meditation on the Holocaust also seems to reflect the composer's self-awareness of his complicated identity as a Jewish-German émigré living in America in the wake of World War II. In this sense, *Survivor* not only accomplishes musical balance but also encodes the unsettling and balancing of personal identity and subjectivity that consumed the composer in 1947—as cultural insider versus outsider, tonal composer versus 12-tone experimenter, German versus Jew.

The final dimension of the musical idea, the presence of the divine, also appears explicitly in *Survivor's* libretto, underscored by the final singing of the *Shema Yisroel*. At the conclusion of the cantata, the narrator makes clear the inevitable death of the Jewish people in the Ghetto, who are being tallied by the Nazis and designated for the gas chambers. In the face of certain annihilation, they proclaim their Jewish faith knowing that the prayer will not save them. In this final moment, the *Shema* is not their plea to God for help but rather a collective confirmation of who they are and what they ultimately believe, a dramatic moment that recalls the line "We are here!" from *Survivor's* source text.⁷³ In this case, the singing of the creed represents their own divine beliefs, a profession of their faith and God, and also transforms into a vehicle of self-expression and confirmation. It is the crux of the cantata, a tremendous personal declaration at the end of the work's long crescendo, both dramatically and musically.

Within *Survivor*, presence of the divine is found not only in the text but also in the music. Both Cross and Covach relate Schoenberg's "mystical" beliefs to the 12-tone technique and the musical idea; this correlation is strengthened by Schoenberg's 12-tone setting of the *Shema*, which unites dodecaphony, self-expression, and the divine. With specific attention to the context of *Survivor*, David Schiller argues that the unity of the 12-tone technique links *Survivor's* musical structure to cosmological ideas in that "Schoenberg's own mystical conception of musical unity accords with the *Shema's* proclamation of the unity of God."⁷⁴ Schiller observes that the first texted instance of the {0,4,8} trichord

⁷³ See the opening stanza of Glick's partisan song.

⁷⁴ Schiller, *Bloch, Schoenberg, and Bernstein*, 104.

coincides with the words “Adonoy Elohenu” in the *Shema* (mm. 81–83) and explains that “Adono[y], translated by the word ‘LORD’ in capital letters, is the Tetragrammaton, the name of God considered too sacred to be pronounced, while Elohenu is the Hebrew word for ‘our God.’ . . . Like the word Adono[y] itself, the augmented triad is here presented as a substitute for the unpronounceable name of God: It is a God motif.”⁷⁵ In the analysis that follows, Schiller notes motivic and vertical occurrences of the {0,4,8} trichord and contends that Schoenberg highlights the God motif during redemptive moments and obscures it during instances of catastrophe.⁷⁶

Schiller’s association of the augmented triad with an expression of God further solidifies the connections between musical idea and the divine in *Survivor* alluded to in this essay, but I would argue that the insights yielded by the previous mnemonic reading of *Survivor* reveal an even deeper embedding of the divine in the cantata and affect the work’s overall meaning. A mnemonic reading reveals that the augmented triad plays not only a motivic role, as Schiller observes, but also determines the large-scale structure of the cantata. This then argues for the omnipresence of God in Schoenberg’s account. Even in those moments when the augmented triad is obscured motivically, the trajectory of the work along the course of the {0,4,8} trichord confirms God as the foundation upon which the entire piece rests. Ever present in the substructure and teleological unfolding of the musical work, God is called forth to memory by the narrator, the men’s choir, and Schoenberg—a process that results in motivic, or recognizable, manifestations of God and ultimately the climactic textual proclamation of the “LORD, our God” in the *Shema Yisroel*. Through the unification of all levels of the poetical, *Survivor* confirms the subject of its idea, whether musical, textual, or autobiographical. It is Schoenberg’s personalized 12-tone expression of our human potential to recognize and remember the presence of God in our lives.

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⁷⁵ Ibid., 103.

⁷⁶ Schiller is most concerned with the conclusion of *Survivor*, in which clearly sung statements of the augmented triad are abandoned for instrumental fragmentation in the final measures. Schiller questions whether this final obscuring of the {0,4,8} triad constitutes a redemptive or catastrophic ending to the work and turns to critical assessments of the work by Theodor Adorno and Kurt List for potential answers. For his full analysis, see *ibid.*, 107–15.

ABSTRACT

This article explores the role of memory within Schoenberg's *Gedanke* Manuscripts and its musical encoding in *A Survivor From Warsaw*, his 1947 Holocaust cantata. In the *Gedanke* Manuscripts human memory serves as analogy for the connective processes that aid the listener in comprehending and identifying the musical idea. Schoenberg argues that a musical idea is recognized (*erkennt*), retained, and then re-recognized (*wiedererkennt*) by the listener in a process similar to that of memory. These comments form the basis for an analysis that demonstrates the patterning of *Survivor's* 12-tone rows according to such mnemonic principles. The encoding of memory in the narrator's testimony as well as in the musical structure suggests that memory functions as an overriding poetic idea that holds several implications for evaluations of the cantata's musical and religious significance within Schoenberg's corpus.

Keywords:

music and the Holocaust

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music and memory

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