

## **Theodor Adorno's Narrative of Alban Berg and His Music: Source Study and Analysis (Fellowship am Staatlichen Institut für Musikforschung von Dr. Morgan Rich)**

Initiative: Postdoctoral Fellowships in den Geisteswissenschaften an Universitäten und Forschungsinstituten  
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This project examines Theodor Adorno's lifelong writings on the Austrian composer Alban Berg. Adorno continually wrote about Berg from 1925 until his death in 1969. All of Adorno's writings on Berg are an attempt to construct a continuous identity of Berg as a composer, to erase the conventional labels of eclecticism or "Berg the romantic" in order to know how and why the music was constructed the way it was. In 1968 Adorno published his monograph, *Alban Berg, Master of the Smallest Link*, which was in some senses a consolidation of Adorno's writings on the composer. Adorno acknowledged that he adapts older writings for the book, but, that the most important materials are newly written. The project argues that Adorno had conceived of a monograph on Berg since 1935 but only in the 1960s was able to construct a monograph because it linked his work on negative dialectics to his analyses of Berg. This project is reliant upon previously unexamined manuscripts by Adorno, housed in both the Theodor W. Adorno Archive (Frankfurt or Berlin) as well as the Alban Berg Archive at the Austrian National Library Music Collection in Vienna. The project demonstrates that this monograph was planned as early as 1935, but underwent periodic changes, being reshaped until its publication in 1968. By presenting the stages of production for this book we can better understand the processes by which Adorno shaped Berg's identity as an avant-garde composer and what new ideas he presents from a lifetime's worth of study. Adorno uses historical narration within the conventions of a musical monograph to orient Berg in his time, all the while establishing Berg's musical continuity - the idea of the "smallest link". Subsequently he stabilizes Berg's identity by presenting a new mode of analysis that challenges prevailing views of Berg.

### **Projektbeteiligte**

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