

*Abstract*

When *Gurre-Lieder* had its first performance in Vienna on February 23, 1913, it was an immediate success despite the fact that Arnold Schoenberg had made a series of scandals with his latest works. The following day, *Pierrot Lunaire* made a new scandal in Prague.

It is a thought-provoking paradox that Schoenberg kept on working on the late Romantic symphonic cantata during the development of his free atonal or pantonal style. In this paper I discuss this paradox in terms of worlding and unworlding in reference to, among others, the philosopher Martin Heidegger and the musicologist John Covach. At the same time as a new musical world emerges in works such as the Second String Quartet and *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*, the world of late Romanticism starts to be dissolved or unworlded.

Vital to this investigation is Stefan George, whose poems Schoenberg began to set to music during this period of change. Instead of only saying that Schoenberg needed texts in order to organize longer compositions during the atonal, pre-dodecaphonic phase – a common suggestion in research on the Second Viennese School – I propose that it is less linguistic elements than the specific tone of the poems that had the sought-after potential. As a matter of fact, George's close friend and foremost interpreter Friedrich Gundolf described a shift from the mood orientation of the early George to the emergence of a powerful tone.

The reviews of the first performances of the Second String Quartet and *Gurre-Lieder* are another important source for this study of a historical process. These texts, often commenting on the reaction of the audience, are testimonies to a conflict between musical worlds. They afford us with a precise formulation of what was heard and what was not heard, leading us to the articulation of a historical attunemental shift.