THEODOR W. ADORNO
& ALBAN BERG
Correspondence
1925-1935
Theodor W. Adorno and Alban Berg
Correspondence 1925–1935
Contents

Editor’s Note vii
Translator’s Note xi

Correspondence 1925–1935 1

Appendix I: Letters from Adorno to Helene Berg 1935–1949 231
Appendix II: Other Correspondence 243

Bibliographical Listing 253
Index 261
Adorno was twenty-one years old when he travelled to Vienna at the start of March 1925, to continue with Alban Berg the studies in composition that he had begun with Bernhard Sekles before entering university. He had first met Berg at the Frankfurt premiere of *Drei Bruchstücke aus der Oper ‘Wozzeck’* in June 1924, and immediately felt drawn to Berg both musically and personally: ‘If I try to recall the impulse that drove me spontaneously to him, it was certainly a very naïve one, but still based on something important for Berg: the Wozzeck fragments, in particular the introduction to the march and the march itself, struck me as both Mahler and Schönberg at once, and this is what I imagined true new music to be like at that time.’

For Adorno, continuing his compositional studies above all meant moving away from the quietly academic and uncritically retrogressive dictates of his first teacher. Bernhard Sekles, with whom he had studied since 1919, was not able to provide him with the guidance he was searching for. The liberation that Adorno experienced with Berg of ‘not having to write tonally’ any more fulfilled a musical need that he had already recognized, but which, according to his own verdict, he had still not succeeded in dealing with practically. In his first letter to Berg, of 5 February 1925, he formulated his reason for coming to Berg quite clearly: ‘Meanwhile, I am dissatisfied with all of these [works], and in order to fulfil my new plans I would first of all like to entrust myself to your guidance and supervision. There are quite specific technical problems at issue, ones which I do not feel equal to; I think that I can tell you quite precisely what help I require from you.’

In addition to various songs, a set of variations for string quartet, and the second of the *Six Short Orchestral Pieces* op. 4, Adorno composed an unfinished string trio during his time with Berg in Vienna;
this was no mean feat for a little under six months’ tuition – twice a week in Berg’s Hietzing apartment, Trauttmansdorffgasse 27 – if one considers that the lessons seem not always to have taken place regularly. By his own account of this part of his life, Adorno would get up early each day, devote the morning to composing, and the afternoon to critical work, at the same time reading Kierkegaard in the evening. His first essay on musical interpretation, ‘Zum Problem der Reproduktion’, was written in March 1925 at the guesthouse Luisenheim, where he was staying during this period. Very soon he began his piano studies with Eduard Steuermann; through Berg he also came into contact with Arnold Schönberg, Anton Webern and Alma Mahler-Werfel. In his capacity as a postillon d’amour between Berg and Hanna Fuchs-Robettin, Adorno travelled to Prague several times, and there made the acquaintance of the musician and writer Hermann Grab.

* What was more important for Adorno than the official and semi-official life in Vienna, however, which he examined critically in his letters to his friend Siegfried Kracauer, was the aesthetic presence of the unity of reflection and compositional practice in Berg’s works, the unique combination of strict construction and a lingual, non-formulaic quality to the music, which Adorno later spoke of as the ‘epic element’ in Mahler. A passage from Adorno’s letter to Berg of 23 November 1925 reveals the early influence of Berg’s tuition and works, also upon Adorno’s critical ideal of a dialectical representation. Writing about his first essay on Wozzeck, he states that the essay, ‘unlike earlier ones, is not disposed according to “surface relations”, but rather finds its balance in the continuity of the underlying thinking, the conceptual simultaneity and factual equality of intentions; so not “sections”, themes to be grasped in isolation. My most secret intention was to make the essay’s use of language correspond directly to the way in which you compose, for example in the quartet. This gave rise to a curious encounter between your manner of composition and my current intellectual stance.’

* In a note from the end of 1944, Adorno writes: ‘How much of my writing will remain is beyond my knowledge or my control, but there is one claim I wish to stake: that I understand the language of music as the heroes in fairy tales understand the language of birds.’ It was no less than the desire to learn to speak this language that drew him to Berg. Adorno already knew what he wanted to compose before he came to Berg; the aim of his stay in Vienna and
the following years was to learn to put this into musical practice. His correspondence with this composer who was soon to be worldfamous is thus partly defined by his engagement with the compositional problems posed for the musical avant-garde by Schönberg’s discovery of the twelve-tone technique, for which Adorno supplied much propaganda, not least in Vienna and through Berg. This correspondence not only documents how he wrote numerous essays on Berg, Webern and Schönberg during this time, and tried in vain to establish a platform for the Second Viennese School against ‘moderated modernity’ in the journal Anbruch, where he exerted considerable editorial influence from the start of 1929 onwards; it also shows how much Adorno – continually admonished by Berg to compose – strove to reconcile his academic duties, the Habilitation, and his literary and journalistic work with the constant wish to compose, only to compose.

For the present edition of the correspondence, the editor was able to draw on a transcription of the Berg letters with a first commentary made in the second half of the 1980s by Prof. Dr Rudolf Stephan and his student Dr Werner Grünzweig. When in doubt, the transcription proved invaluable for consultation; the editor takes sole responsibility for any possible errors, however. Beyond this, Rudolf Stephan supported the editorial work in the most generous manner with his advice. The editor also owes a great deal to Frau Dr Regina Busch in Vienna, who subjected the manuscript to critical reading and suggested numerous improvements.

The originals of Adorno’s letters form a part of the Berg archive in the Musiksammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, there guarded by Dr Josef Gmeiner, whom the editor would like to thank for his valuable support, while Berg’s letters survived among Adorno’s belongings and are now preserved in the Theodor W. Adorno Archiv in Frankfurt.

The surviving letters and cards have been reproduced in full and in chronological order. Two letters written by Maria Wiesengrund, Adorno’s mother, have been included, as they pass on to Berg news of Adorno’s car accident and his welfare in Adorno’s name. A first appendix contains a number of letters written by Adorno to Helene Berg after Berg’s death, which focus particularly intensely on the memory and works of his friend. The second reproduces letters by Berg to Bernhard Sekles and Hans W. Heinsheimer that played as important a part in the correspondence between Adorno and Berg as a letter from Heinsheimer to Adorno concerning the editorial policy of Anbruch and a letter sent to Berg in November 1933 by Edward Dent,
concerning Adorno’s prospects of finding a place in musical life in England.

*  
The notes serve the purpose of explaining names and events mentioned or alluded to in the letters; in addition, they list the relevant works – both musical and literary – of the correspondents. The notes attempt neither a commentary upon the correspondence nor a discussion of the research so far; they are intended merely as an aid to reading.
While translation always involves a balancing act between faithful rendition and an idiomatic use of language, historical documents such as letters raise particular issues. The implicit aim of published translations is generally to create and maintain the fiction that the text in question was actually written in the target language; in a correspondence, however, with countless references to external life and the respective proper names, this fiction is particularly unconvincing. Rather than attempt to translate all names of institutions, classifications of musical works or other references of this kind, I have sought to retain the German where I felt the original could be regarded as a proper name, as opposed to a straightforward categorial classification; one thus finds Frankfurter Kammermusikgemeinde in German, but ‘Berlin State Opera’ in English. With names of works, this principle has also been extended to the parameter of italics; standard terms such as ‘Piano Sonata’ or ‘String Quartet’ are thus not italicized, while more idiosyncratic classifications such as Six Short Orchestral Pieces are. German titles have been retained where I felt that their idiosyncratic nature exceeded this, as with Drei Bruchstücke aus der Oper ‘Wozzeck’.

Besides this, I have also sought to retain any unevenness, clumsiness or stilted language found in the original letters, as well as erroneous or, as in the case of Schönberg rather than Schoenberg, historically authentic spellings of names. While this cannot excuse any shortcomings of the translation, it was considered the primary stylistic aim to reproduce as faithfully as possible the individual tone of each letter, rather than exerting any editorial influence upon the formulations used in the originals.

Wieland Hoban
April 2005
Correspondence 1925–1935
5 February 1925.
Frankfurt a. M. – Oberrad
19 Seeheimer Straße.

Dear Herr Berg,

you may perhaps remember me: at the Tonkünstlerfest¹ in Frankfurt in 1924, I had Scherchen introduce me to you, and told you of my intention to come to Vienna and study with you. The plan has now become ripe for decision, and I would like to ask you if you would be willing to accept me.

Allow me to relate to you in brief my curriculum vitae: I was born in Frankfurt in 1903, completed secondary school in 1921, and received a PhD from the university in 1924 for an epistemological study.² – I have played music since my earliest childhood, first playing the violin/viola, later the piano. My first compositional attempts were also made at an early age; I taught myself harmonic theory, and in 1919 came to Bernhard Sekles³ with songs and chamber music. I have been his student since; most recently, I have been composing five- and eight-part vocal counterpoint and double fugues for voices. Independently of this tuition, I have also been composing for myself; six ‘Studies for String Quartet’ (1920)⁴ were given a private performance in 1921 by the Rebner-Hindemith Quartet,⁵ and my First String Quartet (1921)⁶ was performed in 1923 by Hans Lange. In addition I have written two string trios⁷ and songs with differing instrumentation. The last years have been devoted largely to scientific, pianistic and technical work; I have managed to compose only three four-part songs for female chorus a capella (1923)⁸ and three piano pieces.⁹ Meanwhile, I am dissatisfied with all of these, and in order to fulfil my new plans I would first of all like to entrust myself to your guidance and supervision. There are quite specific technical problems at issue, ones which I do not feel equal to; I think that I can tell you quite precisely what help I require from you.

A by-product of my philosophical and musical activities has been some work as a critic: I was music critic for a Frankfurt journal¹⁰ from 1921–22; since 1923 I have been the Frankfurt correspondent for the ‘Zeitschrift für Musik’; since 1925 I have also reported for the Berlin journal ‘Musik’.

For information concerning me, you would perhaps best consult Sekles (director of the Hochsches Konservatorium), or Dr. Karl Holl¹¹ of the Frankfurter Zeitung. I will gladly send you articles of mine, if you wish; it would probably suit your needs better to send you compositions,
but as I am not content with my work, I am loath to send you anything. At least my writings on music could give you an idea of how I think. – I hope to bring you something when I come to Vienna, some work I can stand by in some measure. – I would also like to continue my piano studies there, and hope you can offer me some friendly advice in this matter. But the deciding purpose of my stay would be your tuition alone. I would be grateful if you could respond soon, and tell me your conditions. – I need hardly add that my powerful impression of your works compels me to call upon your services.

My thanks to you in advance for your efforts

yours in sincere admiration

Dr. Th. Wiesengrund-Adorno.

Original: manuscript.

1 On 16 June 1924, Hermann Scherchen (1891–1966) conducted the premiere of the Drei Bruchstücke aus der Oper ‘Wozzeck’.


3 The composer Bernhard Sekles (1872–1934) taught at the Hoch’sches Konservatorium in Frankfurt from 1896, and was its director from 1923 until the Nazis seized power; he was also Paul Hindemith’s teacher.

4 The premiere of the yet unpublished work was given on 12 September 1994 in Frankfurt by the Neues Leipziger Streichquartett.

5 The quartet founded by the Austrian violinist Adolf Rebner (1876–1967), who also taught at the Hoch’sches Konservatorium; Hindemith played in the quartet until 1921.

6 The premiere took place on 24 April 1923 in Frankfurt; besides this, the Lange Quartett (H. Lange, R. Itkes, G. Graf, W. Lange) played the String Quartet op. 28 by Ernst Toch – also a premiere – and 4 Gesänge für Tenorstimme mit Violine und 2 Bratschen by Ludwig Rottenberg (1864–1932).

7 The first of these – dedicated to Adorno’s former German teacher ‘Reinhold Zickel in friendship’ – is dated ‘June 1921–February 1922’; the second, composed immediately after it, follows the model of Schönberg’s First Chamber Symphony op. 9 in its single-movement form, and is signed: ‘Fair copy completed 18.IV.1922: on Gustav Mahler’s birthday’. Both trios are as yet unpublished; the first was premiered by Trio Recherche on 30 July 1994, during the International Summer Course for New Music in Darmstadt.
8 These are the Drei Gedichte von Theodor Däubler für vierstimmigen Frauenchor op. 8, which Adorno revised in 1945.

9 These as yet unpublished pieces – dedicated to Maria Proelss – were premiered by Maria Luisa Lopez-Vito on 18 September 1981, during the seventh Festival of Contemporary Music in Bolzano.

10 The reference is to the Neue Blätter für Kunst und Literatur, edited by Albert Dessoff, which was published from 1918 to 1923.

11 Karl Holl (1892–1975), who worked for the Frankfurter Zeitung from 1922, had taken over Paul Bekker’s post there in 1925.

WIESENGRUND-ADORNO TO BERG
FRANKFURT, 17.2.1925

Frankfurt a. M. – Oberrad,
19 Seeheimer Straße
17 February 1925.

Esteemed Herr Berg,
many thanks for your cordial letter,1 which compels me to come to you as soon as possible, if possible still in February, otherwise in the first days of March. I shall give you the precise date,2 or call you directly in Vienna. – I also look forward to following you to Berlin in May,3 if this meets your approval. In June you would be back in Vienna, I daresay.

It gives me particular satisfaction that you were sympathetic to my articles,4 as they caused me some frustration in Frankfurt. I should think that I will find a somewhat conveniently situated room with a grand piano. I have already asked friends in Vienna5 to look for quarters for me.

Devoted greetings
Yours Th. Wiesengrund-Adorno.

Original: manuscript.

1 Berg’s letter of reply does not seem to have been preserved.

2 Adorno arrived in Vienna on 5 March.

3 That is to say; to the premiere of Wozzeck originally scheduled for early 1925, which took place only on 14 December 1925.

4 In Berg’s library, an issue of the journal Neue Blätter für Kunst und Literatur, dated 18 September 1922 (vol. 5, no. 1), has survived, containing two articles by Adorno: ‘Bartók-Aufführungen in Frankfurt’ (see GS 19, pp.
16–21) and ‘Zeitgenössische Kamermusik: erster und zweiter Abend im Verein für Theater- und Musikkultur’ (see GS 19, pp. 21–4).

5 Unknown.

3 WIESENGRUND-ADORNO TO BERG
VIENNA, 19.5.1925

fuchs robettin¹
for berg

arrive wednesday lunchtime
blauer stern² wiesengrund

Original: telegram.

1 At the time, Berg was staying in Prague, where Alexander von Zemlinsky (1872–1942) performed the Drei Bruchstücke aus Wozzeck on 20 May. Berg was the guest of the industrialist family Fuchs-Robettin; Herbert Fuchs-Robettin (1886–1949) was married to Franz Werfel’s sister Hanna (1894–1964); the invitation most probably came about on the initiative of Alma Mahler-Werfel. Hanna Fuchs-Robettin, with whom Berg fell in love, was the addressee of the ‘secret programme’ of the Lyric Suite (see George Perle, ‘Das geheime Programm der Lyrischen Suite’, in Musik-Konzepte, ed. Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn, 4: Alban Berg, Kammermusik I, Munich, 1978, pp. 49–74). Berg’s letters to Hanna Fuchs-Robettin were published for the first time in 1995; see Constantin Floros, Alban Berg und Hanna Fuchs: Briefe und Studien, in Österreichische Musikzeitschrift, special fiftieth anniversary issue, Vienna, 1995, pp. 30–69.

2 The hotel Zum blauen Stern in Prague. Adorno was also invited to the Fuchs-Robettins’ house.

4 WIESENGRUND-ADORNO TO ALBAN
AND HELENE BERG
MARIENBAD, 9.6.1925

Mariánske Lázně, 9 June 25.

Dear Herr Berg and dear lady, as proof of the fact that I, in spite of the irate Steuermann,¹ am truly relaxing for a few days, I send you, from the idyllically languid Marienbad, this card, which is not particularly beautiful, and would certainly not have immortalized your friend P. A.² But the air is good, and the colonnade is full of tempta-
tions to literature. I hope that one part of you is fever-free, and the other part composing, yours in faithful devotion Teddie W.

Best wishes
Anna v. Tölnay.


1 The pianist and composer Eduard Steuermann (1892–1964), who had studied with Ferruccio Busoni and Arnold Schönberg and went on to become one of the most important performers of the Second Viennese School, was Adorno’s piano teacher during his Vienna days, and a close friend until his death; see Adorno’s 1964 obituary ‘Nach Steuermanns Tod’ (GS 17, pp. 311–17) and ‘Die Komponisten Eduard Steuermann und Theodor W. Adorno: aus ihrem Briefwechsel’ (in: Adorno-Noten, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, Berlin, 1984, pp. 40–72).

2 The Austrian poet Peter Altenberg (1859–1919), whose real name was Richard Engländer, owned a sizeable collection of postcards; Berg composed his Fünf Orchesterlieder nach Ansichtskartentexten von Peter Altenberg as op. 4.

3 Unknown.

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5 BERG TO WIESENGRUND-ADORNO
SÖLLHUBEN, NEAR ROSENHEIM, 18.6.1925

Post office:
Söllhuben, near Rosenheim as address!!!
Upper Bavaria, c/o v. Klenau as address!!!

My dear Wiesengrund I come to you with a few requests:
I wish to give the lady of the house2 ‘Die letzten Tage der Menschheit’ by Karl Kraus as a farewell gift. Could you please obtain a linen-bound copy for me at Lányi’s (Kärntnerstraße extension) & send it to me post haste. Perh. you can let Lányi send it to me after you pay for it (with postage). When I come to Vienna (which should be at the end of the month) I will reimburse you for the sum.

2.) I need for my fair copy,3 which is progressing slowly but surely (often when asthma torments me I already sit at my desk at 5 in the morning!), a few more quills matching the sample I have enclosed. Please insert a few into your next letter to me! But to be on the safe side, buy a few dozen right away, and I shall take them off you after my return (I believe Soennecken has a special Vienna branch, in case you cannot find the quills in any larger ‘city’ stationer’s!).
3. Please tell me what size of tips I should give here in your opinion (& maybe ask around a bit). & send 2 maids to take care of everything for us

I. Clearing up
   serving
   etc

II. Cooking
It would be for about 3 weeks & according to German terms, which are about twice the size of Austrian terms!

Re. 1.) should ‘Die letzten Tage der Menschheit’ be unavailable, then please the two volumes ‘Weltgericht’4 by Kraus

I expect you have by now received my letter of the 16th with newspaper cuttings.5 Since then, nothing has changed. I am quite content with my work. And aside from this I soak my nerves – which are improving daily – in water & air. Reading: after long vain attempts (Ossendovski: People, Animals & Gods)6 Döblin7 [what do you think and know of him??] Meyrink (Golem!)8 finally landed with a poet: Flaubert ‘Bouvard & Pécuchet’.

So in July I am sure to be in Vienna. –

Fond regards, also from my wife.

Yours Berg

What’s the matter with you, my dear Wiesengrund? No news from you since your postcard from Marienbad!

Original: manuscript.

1 Written by Berg along the bracket.

2 Annemarie von Klenau (1878–1977), sister of the editor of the Frankfurter Zeitung, Heinrich Simon, was married to the Danish composer and conductor Paul August von Klenau (1883–1946) until 1926.

3 Berg completed the fair copy of the Kammerkonzert für Klavier und Geige mit 13 Bläsern (Chamber Concerto for Piano and Violin with 13 Wind Instruments), which he had begun composing in early 1923, on 23 July 1925.

4 The two volumes were published in Leipzig in 1919.

5 Not preserved.

6 The travel book Animals, People and Gods by the Polish writer Antoni Ossendovski was published in Frankurt 1923–4.

7 Possibly Wallenstein – as mentioned in the following letter – which was published in 1920 in two volumes.

8 Gustav Meyrink’s novel first appeared in 1915.
Vienna, 21 June 25.
(– Café Museum)
(I got the quills together here through begging; as I did so, a waiter spilled milk on the letter – of human kindness?)

Dear Herr Berg,

yesterday evening I found your letter awaiting me at home, and will make my way to Lányi and Soennecken first thing tomorrow. I already received your card¹ and the Krull fragment² (which is wonderful, I once heard Thomas Mann read it) a few days earlier, and am most grateful to you. The fact that I am writing only now is the fault of a heavy depression which has rendered me incapable of any utterance; no unfounded one, as so often, but rather one stemming from events. Everything I begin ends in failure, and it need not surprise you if I soon borrow some Strindberg off you. To start with my journey to Czechoslovakia was a dead loss. Not only was there not a trace of recovery; this time I did not even find my lady friend (who signed the card), and went angrily on to Prague, where I could at least give vent to some philosophizing with dear Grab,³ admittedly without thus finding a substitute for my friend. In Vienna I immediately got into a discussion with the Marxist thinker Lukács⁴ (arranged by Morgenstern),⁵ whom, as you know, I greatly revere; he made a strong impression upon me on a personal level, but in intellectual terms communication proved impossible, which of course pained me particularly in the case of Lukács, who has had a more profound intellectual influence on me than almost anyone else.

Now the sensation, the tragedy or the satyr play, however one chooses to see it: Heinsheimer⁶ approached me and, to my utter amazement, offered me the chief editorship of ‘Anbruch’ to replace Stefan,⁷ whom he felt unable to work with any longer. I cannot tell you how sorely I missed you: at Universal Edition I felt like a virgin in a dissolute men’s club. I consulted with Morgenstern, who is a reliable and valuable person, with Stein,⁸ who encouraged me vigorously, and with Steuermann, who, despite Krausian reservations, did not discourage me. I conferred with Heinsheimer for an entire morning on the nature of my position, and already conceived a (detailed) programme for him.
On the day of the deciding meeting, Heinsheimer explained to me briefly and cordially that he had — only now, after extensive negotiations! — spoken to Hertzka, and that the bearded one could not decide at present to let Stefan go.

You can imagine my displeasure! Only think if I had undertaken further efforts to acquire the position! But I certainly had no desire to challenge poor Stefan’s income; all the initiative came from the other side, only to be overturned in a manner that forced me into the vile situation of the unsuccessful entrepreneur, which is as little suited to me as, shall we say, loyalty is to Herr Hertzka. That evening, in the museum and then in the Reichsbar, the same society gathered from which you received the card, which I hope you did not take offence at on account of its tone, for it was sincerely meant, but simply as strained as the mood that evening! Eisler, incidentally, who is truly attached to you, and speaks of you with warmth and veneration, asks your permission to visit you before his final departure to Berlin.

As for me, I play Beethoven from morning until evening. Also compose, albeit somewhat sporadically. But now I hope: ça ira. It is good to hear that you are making progress with the fair copy, on account of the concerto, which is, and the quartet, which is to be; it is less pleasing that your asthma has returned; I had hoped that it had faded with time; but I suppose that the things we suffer have their own temporality, and all that remains is the desperate belief that it is all for the sake of eternity. Forgive my theological digression, which certainly does little to alleviate concrete suffering; I only venture it because I know that you, like me, can only gain mastery over suffering by interpreting and forming it! And as, I think, we have no alternative, you will not find my symbolic excursion unkind. I hope that the woods offer you more palpable help.

Is Flaubert the right thing for you at present; and his most terrible book at that? Do you know the education sentimentale?! — Döblin is a difficult case, very talented (coming intellectually from the circles of Bloch and Lukács), but truly degenerate, and without conscience in the aestheticizing manner in which he appropriates religious elements. I suspect that Karl Kraus is right in his opposition to him. What is more, I find his attempt in Wallenstein to take control of history once more shaky, not least in its conceptual foundations. More on this when we speak.

And how are you, dear lady? Do you still have a fever, or did the cure you took enable you to recover properly and take your fill of verdure, so that you can now return to Vienna fit for music making? And is Germany, southern Germany not delightful after all? It is you who should now read Gottfried Keller, as I so long to do.

— To the baser life once more; 10, at the very most 15 gold marks
will surely suffice for each of the maids, probably it is much too much by rural standards.

I look forward more than I can express to seeing you both once more. Devotedly yours
Teddie Wiesengrund

Original: manuscript.

1 The card seems not to have survived.


3 The Prague-born Hermann Grab (1903–1949), who, after doctorates in philosophy and law, as well as a brief subsequent career as a lawyer, worked primarily as a writer and musician, was a student of Alexander von Zemlinsky.

4 Adorno writes at length about his visit to Lukács in the Isbarygasse 12 in Hütteldorf in his unpublished letter of 17 June 1925 to Siegfried Kracauer.


6 Hans Heinsheimer (1900–1993), who had studied with Julius Weismann and Karol Rathaus, was director of the opera department at Universal Edition from 1921 to 1938; he emigrated to the USA in 1938.

7 From 1923, Paul Stefan (1879–1943) was editor of the *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, which was published by Universal Edition; it was only in 1929 that Adorno became the unofficial editor of *Anbruch*, as the journal was called from that year onwards, while Stefan remained the official ‘editorial director’ (*Schriftleiter*).

8 The music writer and conductor Erwin Stein (1885–1958), who had studied with Schönberg, was editor of the journal *Pult und Taktstock* (Podium and Baton), which he had founded, and which was also published by Universal Edition, from 1924 to 1930. See also Adorno’s essay ‘Erwin Stein: zu seinem Tode’ (*GS* 19, p. 463f.).

9 The Budapest-born Emil Hertzka (1873–1932) was director of Universal Edition from 1909.

10 The card seems not to have been preserved.

11 Hanns Eisler (1898–1962), who took private lessons with Schönberg from 1919 to 1923, may already have made Berg’s acquaintance in 1919 through the *Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen* (Society for Private Musical Performances).
12 Also a reference to the French revolutionary song *Ah! ça ira!*, which Adorno had arranged some weeks previously as part of the *Sept chansons populaires françaises arrangées pour une voix et piano* (Seven Popular French Songs Arranged for Solo Voice and Piano), which Adorno is likely to have shown Berg; see Theodor W. Adorno, *Compositions*, ed. Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn, vol. 1: *Songs for Voice and Piano*, Munich, 1980, p. 94ff. (the volume will henceforth be abbreviated as Adorno, *Compositions 1*).

13 It could not be conclusively ascertained what Adorno is referring to here; the only statement made by Kraus about Döblin from the mid-1920s concerns the latter’s review of the Berlin premiere of *Traumtheater* and *Traumstück* on 25 March 1924 on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his journal *Die Fackel*; see *Die Fackel*, no. 649–656, early June 1924, p. 40ff.

7 WIESENGRUND–ADORNO TO BERG

MADONNA DI CAMPIGLIO, 23.8.1925

Madonna di Campiglio, Hotel Campo di Carlo Magno, 23.VIII.

Dear esteemed Herr Berg,

after a strenuous journey¹ I have arrived here, and am already quite captivated by the indescribably beautiful and impressive natural surroundings, and am taking pains to devote myself extensively to all holiday duties. Yesterday we went motoring at length, and after Schönberg’s latest turn² I felt I was entitled to drive over the Tonale pass, not least because there is no Atonale pass. Many thanks for your card; the quotation,³ it seems, to me, is from Götterdämmerung; but what does it mean?! More soon. Fond regards to both of you devotedly yours Teddie W.


1 With his departure from Vienna on 19 August, Adorno also ended his lessons with Berg.

2 Presumably a reference to Schönberg’s Suite op. 29 for piano, E flat clarinet, clarinet, bass clarinet, violin, viola and cello, about whose third movement – *Thema mit Variationen* – Adorno wrote in 1928: ‘The third movement is a set of variations on *Ännchen von Tharau*. The theme, the unchanged E major melody, is adapted in the most artful manner to the vertically disposed note-row and its inverted and retrograde forms, being retained and henceforth contrasted with the other row-material – which is also retained – as an exceptional note-row, but at the same time also treated thematically in the traditional variational sense’ (GS 18, p. 361). This movement was completed in
August 1925 – the complete Suite only in early May 1926 – so it is possible that Adorno learned of Schönberg’s procedures by word of mouth while still in Vienna.

3 Berg’s card with the Wagner quotation seems to have been lost; in the preface to his book on Berg of 1968, Adorno writes: ‘Bidding farewell for a longer time, Alban Berg wrote the author a postcard with a quotation of the Hagen passage in Götterdämmerung: “Sei treu” [be faithful]’ (GS 13, p. 324). See Richard Wagner, Götterdämmerung, act II, scene 2 (piano reduction by Felix Mottl, p. 159); the words are spoken by Alberich to his son Hagen.

8 WIESENGRUND-ADORNO TO ALBAN AND HELENE BERG
CAPRI, 12.9.1925

Hôtel des Palmes
CAPRI
12 September 25.

Dear esteemed Herr Berg,

I am sincerely troubled to hear nothing from you. Did you not receive my cards from Madonna and Genoa? Or did I offend you somehow: by not understanding the quotation? Or what else can it be? Is your wife sick? Are you stricken with asthma once again? I ask with all my heart that you send me a reply and, if you have something against me, to tell me rather than shrouding yourself in silence. I am myself too much inclined to silence not to understand it entirely on your part. But for this reason I also know, better now than I once did, of its danger. So allow me to chance this attack, at the risk of being objectively unqualified to do so.

Are you composing? And what has it become? Symphony or suite, and indeed a quartet? Or songs after all? At any rate, it will no doubt be more correct a priori than the theory with which, bore that I am, I rather molested you, and which must be incorrect a priori, but was not actually meant a priori, rather with reference to a current matter, at the time that I pronounced it. And I had long known that the problem of the turn towards the objective was a considerably more complex matter than I had indicated when I inveighed against beginning with the objective without any personal investment, that is, against Kőnig and in part also against Eisler, and I hope that this came to the surface in the essay on Schönberg (has that been published yet?). I would like to repeat this with emphasis, as it is conceivable that you may have taken offence at the rigidity of my attitude – a rigidity that can be smoothed out entirely by any one note of your music. But you will
concede that in a situation whose points of orientation have shifted as far as they have today, any intention that hopes to preserve itself must continually overstep the limits imposed on it by the dialectic of reality, as otherwise the chaos around it will break its already insecure boundaries. That, despite metaphysically charged terminology, is probably all that I was endeavouring to communicate with my proclamation of ‘subjectivism’.

For my part, I am currently pursuing an unconditional – albeit not without some wanton advance interpretation – apperception of reality. The mountains would be the right thing for me, I realized this once again in Madonna, and I think I need not fear any loss of originality if I should plan later on to divide my time between South Tyrol and Vienna. Would you still be in accord? I consider it likely that I shall return to that particular city which cannot decline far sooner than I had supposed, as I am concerned with decline in particular – my own, of course. – In the meantime Italy, in particular southern Italy, has taken up a rather skewed position among my categories. A land in which the volcanoes are institutions, and the swindlers are saved, goes against my public spirit just as fascism conflicts with my inflammatory tendencies. And yet I am very well here. Though one does not get around to composing, as the external distractions are too strong and too alien, and whereas I could spend entire nights sketching in Madonna, I now lie beneath the zanzariera, relishing my protection from the mosquitoes.

Your demonic taste for civilization and illusion would find ample sustenance here, for nowhere is civilization more glassy than in Italy, and intense, though in a different, more positive sense than with us, for the whole of life, lived as it were to the point of destruction, resists constant stabilizations and mirrors its own transience in illusion.

Being together with my friend is in every sense exciting and important: in personal terms it demands full relaxation, in factual terms it forces a revision of the very basis. Indeed, in the six months of separation, we have both developed in the same sense – a sense that would also be fitting to you. He is no cheerful fellow, to be sure. We spent yesterday afternoon commenting on sports reviews in the B.Z., that was enjoyable. – I shall send you an essay by my friend which I identify with (I once spoke to you of it) entitled ‘Der Künstler in dieser Zeit’. When is the Wozzeck premiere? I shall most certainly come, and would ask that you inform me of the relevant details in good time. I can take care of accommodation for Klein; I need only know the date. Probably with Herzberger, Berlin N, Prinzenallee 58. Or in Dahlem. But without any doubt. – My Webern endeavour has not yet borne tangible fruits.

For the time being I am remaining here, then we will take a look at Pompeii and Paestum, also Naples once more, and hope to gain a few
days for Sicily; for it would be a sin to visit Rome in passing. At the
start of October I shall be in Frankfurt, and intend to stay in
Amorbach for a few weeks in order to compose there – assuming that
Wozzeck does not call me to Berlin.
Do you know that I still have your Altenberg? I will send you the
volume as soon as I am within a secure postal district. From Capri it
strikes me as too unsafe.
You, dear Frau Helene, should not work too much, today it is my
turn to preach this to you. And you are not to have any fever. But rather
take walks and sing: those songs op. 2, these op. 15, and those by
Zemlinsky from which I only ever heard you sing ‘wohin gehst du’.
I must ask you once again, o master of secret configurations, for the
solution to your card that appears to have eluded me.
With my very fondest wishes.
Devotedly yours
Teddie W.

Original: manuscript with printed letterhead.

1 Adorno’s card from Genoa appears not to have reached Berg.
2 It is possible that Berg had spoken to Adorno of his early – ultimately frag-
   mentary – symphonic plans (see Alban Berg, Sämtliche Werke, ed. Alban Berg
   Stiftung, department: symphonic fragments. Facsimile edition with trans-
   scripts, supplied and introduced by Rudolph Stephan, Vienna, 1984), and
   speculated in conversation on returning to them. The question regarding the
   ‘suite’ most probably refers to the Lyric Suite for string quartet; Adorno, as
   letter 42 reveals, preferred the formal classification ‘quartet’.
3 See Adorno, ‘Schönberg: Serenade, op. 24’, in Pult und Taktstock, 2
4 Ital.: mosquito net.
5 This is Siegfried Kracauer (1889–1966), with whom Adorno, coming from
   the Dolomites, had met in early September in Genoa, and with whom he trav-
  elled to southern Italy.
6 This is the Berliner Zeitung.
7 Kracauer’s essay ‘Der Künstler in dieser Zeit’ (The Artist in Our Time) was
   published in the journal Der Morgen (vol. 1, 1925–6, pp. 101–9); see
   Siegfried Kracauer, Schriften, ed. Inka Mülder-Bach, vol. 5 [1]: Aufsätze
   1915–1926, Frankfurt am Main, 1900, pp. 300–8.
8 The composer Fritz Heinrich Klein (1892–1977) was a student of Alban
   Berg; he edited the piano reductions of Wozzeck and the Chamber Concerto.
9 This means in the apartment of the Berlin branch of the Herzberger family.
   Whether or not the wealthy businesswoman Else Herzberger (1877?–1962),
a long-standing friend of Adorno’s parents, was also living in Berlin at the
time could not be ascertained.

10 Unknown.

11 It is unknown which volume by Peter Altenberg Adorno had borrowed
from Berg.

12 See Alban Berg, Four Songs for Voice and Piano op. 2, on poems by
Hebbel and Mombert.

13 See Arnold Schönberg, 15 Gedichte aus ‘Das Buch der hängenden
Gärten’ von Stefan George op. 15.

14 The quotation is from the last of the Maeterlinck songs – ‘Sie kam zum
Schloss gegangen’ – the Six Songs for Voice and Piano op. 13 by Alexander
von Zemlinsky.

9 BERG TO WIESENGRUND-ADORNO
TRAHÜTTEN, 21.9.1925

ALBAN BERG C/O NAHOWSKI
TRAHÜTTEN IN STEIERMARK
POST OFFICE: DEUTSCH-LANDSBERG
A./D. GRAZ-KÖFLACH RAILWAY

21/9.25

Dear Theddy, for the last month I had received only your card from
Madonna & was therefore genuinely a little peeved*. For this reason,
& because I could not know how long you would be reachable there,
I did not write. Now, however, I have been reassured by your letter
from Capri & I hope that you too shall be once you have received mine.

I have had – externally – a rather busy time. When we bade each
other farewell at the Südbahnhof on the 17./8., I little suspected that
I would that same evening – instead of finding the country house in
Trahütten empty, for me to rest my weary nerves, find an entire family
there: the husband of my wife’s sister¹ had suffered a terrible lung
haemorrhage the previous night, and could of course not be moved,
leaving this family of four: a severely ill man, a severely hysterical wife,
a severely ill-behaved, noisy child & a servant suffering from severe
religious delusions in the house & the 3 of us² squashed together into
2 small rooms in the middle of this wasps’ nest.

We bore this for 8 days, then we fled. Back in Vienna 8 days [where

* And after leaving you with that rather pregnant Wagner quotation to boot. Perhaps you
shall one day find someone who knows his Wagner well enough (as you know your
Schönberg) that he can reveal to you the missing words of the text. I should think that there
are still – ‘thank God’ – a few such people!