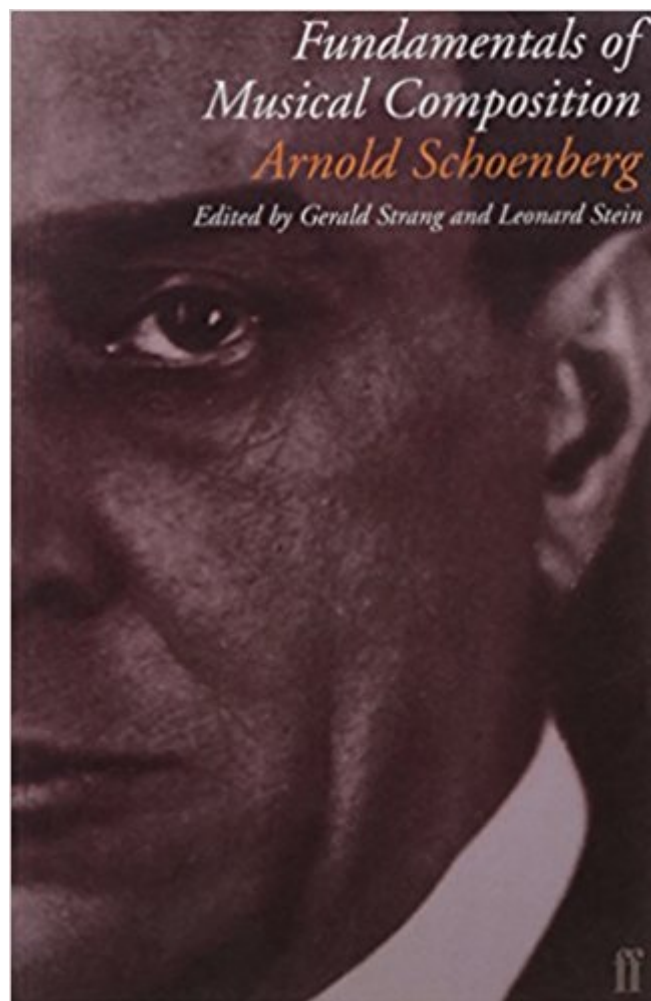


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Fundamentals Of Musical Composition



Synopsis

A reissue of a classic that represents the culmination of over 40 years in Schoenberg's life devoted to the teaching of musical principles to students and composers in Europe and America. For his classes, he developed a manner of presentation in which "every technical matter is discussed in a very fundamental way, so that at the same time it is both simple and thorough". This book can be used for analysis as well as for composition. On the one hand, it has the practical objective of introducing students to the process of composing in a systematic way, from the smallest to the largest forms; on the other hand, the author analyzes in detail, with numerous illustrations, those particular sections in the works of the masters which relate to the compositional problem under discussion.

Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Faber & Faber; New Ed edition (March 15, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0571196586

ISBN-13: 978-0571196586

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.6 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (14 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Schoenberg worked on this text as part of his work with students at UCLA. He worked on it until his death in 1951 and had revised it several times. It is meant for students of composition rather than general music students studying form. The terminology is often Schoenberg's own and he, of course, has many interesting and strongly held views and approaches. It is not a text on twelve-tone composition, but of traditional and classic forms. It was written in English rather than Schoenberg's native German, but he had the help of this volume's editor, Gerald Strang. In this edition, many of Schoenberg's specially composed examples were replaced by examples from the literature and the proprietary examples moved to the volume "Structural Functions of Harmony". This is meant to

serve as a very fundamental discussion of these matters for students who are thinking about becoming composers.

I have studied a lot of books on composition and in my opinion this is the best damned book on how to write music. Although Schoenberg gave us atonality, this book is all about learning how to write traditional music. The book is very systematic in its approach and relies on Arnold's own mastery of traditional music. If you don't believe me, listen to Jacob's Ladder and other works prior to his serial music. Please keep in mind that this book requires knowledge of rudiments of music theory. If you need to brush up on that, may I suggest Paul Harder's fantastic book on the subject: *Basic Materials in Music Theory*.

Best book to acquire a sense of form. Both beginners and advanced composers should study Schoenberg's book on composition thoroughly.

I don't particularly like Schoenberg's music, but I think he does quite well in this book, which primarily covers musical form ranging from the tiniest motif to the complete sonata. He goes into detail about how each part of a piece is structured from ever smaller elements down to the phrase and the motifs within it. Over all, it really does cover the fundamentals of musical composition well. The book covers a number of common musical forms in classical music, including minuets, scherzos, theme-and-variation, and the sonata-allegro form. I was somewhat disappointed to see that important forms like the concerto and the tone poem were not covered, and it should be noted that Schoenberg focuses mainly on form in this book rather than harmony. However, the approach presented in the book strikes me as somewhat contrived and mechanical and I find it hard to believe that Beethoven thought to himself "hmm, maybe I should invert the motif in measure 2 and repeat it at a different interval in measure 3". Other than that, though, it is mostly quite useful, though certainly not light reading.

Schoenberg's *Theory of Harmony* is another one I've spent considerably more time with, and I give it top marks.

Product as described. Quality materials used.

This book is based on Schoenberg's thorough analyses of music mostly the classical period that

includes copious examples and textual references to the works of Beethoven, Mozart and Haydn. It is a guide for the student and teacher in composition as projected out from late 18th and early 19th century practice. The best consideration was given to melodic construction with reference to aesthetic principles but with too much emphasis on underlying harmonic structure. I believe that Schoenberg wrote stereotypical pieces in each genre for himself in order to understand the harmonic and formal schemes better. His discussions lead from his investigations. I found the exposition of all the larger forms at the end of the book dull reading though and wonder why he left out the basic Binary Form, which is so controversial in the development of the Sonata Form. This has significance in the recent scholarship by Charles Rosen and others, who focus on the construction of Scarlatti Sonatas and those of the pre-classics like Sammartini in order to show the evolution of the development section or *Durchfuhrung*, the word that the author uses frequently. A curious sequence is placing the chapter on Phrase before that of Motive if the consideration is about writing melodies. The reason for doing this is the controversial claim that the phrase is the shortest unit of music. Further on, I wonder if the early Rondo directly influenced the later Sonata-Rondos. The book could be considered a bit dated because there is no recognition of what is commonly called harmonic rhythm, a concept discovered by W. Piston. The analyses of chordal structures is somewhat in error for disregarding this. The odd thing about Schoenberg is that none of his music represents an assimilation of the concepts of the classical tradition nor did he write anything approaching real counterpoint in any of the pieces he wrote in later years, and this is said about a consummate master in this style.

I can't speak to the value of Schoenberg's work. I found the edition illegible...simply a problem of printing I presume. Awful, shifted typeface, bad ink/paper match I don't know. Deeply disappointed with this edition.

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