

Music of a Film City: Interwar Europe in Los Angeles, 1930s

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Abstract : The musical culture of the city of Los Angeles, as it is seen today, developed not without the influence of outstanding musicians who came from Europe during the period between the world wars. The combination of European modernist ideas with American musical culture, which differed in many ways from European musical culture, led to unique results. During the 1920s and even more so in the 1930s, members of the Austrian-German artistic intelligentsia, particularly those of Jewish origin who felt insecure in their homeland, began to look for a safer place. The United States has become such a place for many, and many of them chose the second largest metropolis—Los Angeles. The most notable figure in this group was the modernist composer Arnold Schoenberg. Other famous musicians were conductors Otto Klemperer and Bruno Walter. The study focused on how these people acclimated to a city whose culture and business revolved around film production; what place the conductors Klemperer and Walter occupied in the city, state, and country; how Schoenberg, whose musical style was little understood by the American public, was able to realize himself; what path he took when he was accepted to two universities as a professor of counterpoint and composition; and whether he revised his own views on the development of Western music. Another aspect was the study of how the composer's memory was preserved in the universities where he taught. The study is based primarily on materials found in four libraries of two universities located in Los Angeles, UCLA and USC, during my tenure as a visiting scholar at USC Thornton School of Music (August 2023), to be completed during my upcoming visit there in August-September 2024, as well as on interviews with people active in efforts to keep Schoenberg's memory alive on the USC Campus.

Keywords : los angeles, filmmaking, immigrant musicians, arnold schoenberg, otto klemperer, bruno walter

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