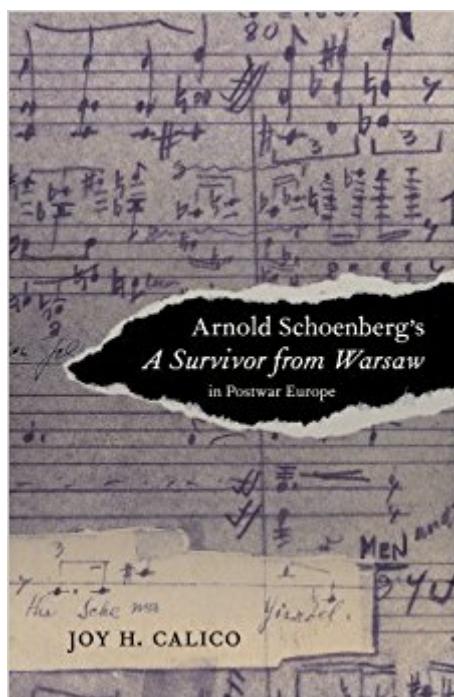


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# Arnold Schoenberg's A Survivor From Warsaw In Postwar Europe (California Studies In 20th-Century Music)



## Synopsis

Joy H. Calico examines the cultural history of postwar Europe through the lens of the performance and reception of Arnold Schoenberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw*; a short but powerful work, she argues, capable of irritating every exposed nerve in postwar Europe. Schoenberg, a Jewish composer whose oeuvre had been one of the Nazis' prime exemplars of *entartete* (degenerate) music, immigrated to the United States and became an American citizen. Both admired and reviled as a pioneer of dodecaphony, he wrote this twelve-tone piece about the Holocaust in three languages for an American audience. This book investigates the meanings attached to the work as it circulated through Europe during the early Cold War in a kind of symbolic musical remigration, focusing on six case studies: West Germany, Austria, Norway, East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. Each case is unique, informed by individual geopolitical concerns, but this analysis also reveals common themes in anxieties about musical modernism, Holocaust memory and culpability, the coexistence of Jews and former Nazis, anti-Semitism, dislocation, and the presence of occupying forces on both sides of the Cold War divide.

## Book Information

Series: California Studies in 20th-Century Music (Book 17)

Hardcover: 272 pages

Publisher: University of California Press; 1 edition (March 15, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0520281861

ISBN-13: 978-0520281868

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,697,626 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #41 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Sheet Music & Scores > Composers > Schoenberg #7962 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Classical #8574 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > History & Criticism

## Customer Reviews

"Highly recommended. Yields rich, evocative insights into a period of modernist music making now receding from consciousness." (CHOICE 2014-10-01)"Joy Calico, however, writes with an ease and fluidity that positively invite the reader to understand her ideas and observations. She takes one of

Schoenberg's most important American works and uses it as a political barometer during the crucial post-war years of 1948 to 1968. As concepts go, it is quite brilliant. Addressing Cold War cultural politics in Germany, Austria, Norway, Poland and Czechoslovakia using Schoenberg's A Survivor from Warsaw clearly illuminates the political complexities of the time." (Michael Haas Times Literary Supplement 2015-02-18)"Joy H. Calico's new book is an impressive work of cultural history... on its own, fascinating terms, Calico has written a book that will repay attention from a variety of readers." (H-German 2016-12-05)

"An exemplary exploration in cultural history which shows with great nuance and sophistication how a single seven-minute musical work can open up so many key themes for understanding postwar Europe. This is a fascinating and important book that demonstrates how postwar Europe, including its Cold War division, needs to be understood not solely through politics but through the interpretation of cultural forms." &#151;Dan Stone, author of *Goodbye to All That? The Story of Europe since 1945* (forthcoming 2014) "A unique addition to the burgeoning field of Cold War music studies. In Calico's hands, a meticulously researched history of the European reception of Schoenberg's brief cantata becomes a compelling tale of high-stakes cultural politics." &#151;Walter Frisch, author of *The Early Works of Arnold Schoenberg* "Using Schoenberg's charged Holocaust memorial as a guide, Calico traces an innovative, transnational path through postwar European cultural life, challenging, refining, and overturning well-worn assumptions along the way. This highly compelling book will appeal to a wide range of readers interested in history, music, politics, Jewish studies, and the Cold War." &#151;Peter Schmelz, Associate Professor of Musicology, Washington University in St. Louis

Arnold Schoenberg's work "A Survivor from Warsaw" op. 46 was one of the major triumphs of the composer's career while in exile in the United States. Written in 1947, it presents the account of a Holocaust survivor over a dramatic twelve-tone orchestral backing; the man that the reciter plays is an imaginary character that Schoenberg came up with himself, drawing on the varied reports coming from Europe after the war. At the climax, a male choir enters in with the Hebrew "Sh'ma Yisroel", the hymn that also serves as an age-old symbol of Jewish faith and identity. This book by Joy H. Calico is dedicated to how "A Survivor from Warsaw" came to Europe in the first two decades after Schoenberg composed it. Not only was the piece being performed among audiences still very aware of the war years, but its reception was also buffeted by the winds of political quarrels and geopolitics. The performance history of the piece is in fact a mirror of postwar -- and sometimes

Cold War -- Europe. Calico describes performances and the reception of "A Survivor from Warsaw" in West Germany, Austria, Norway, East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia between 1948 and 1968. (The European premiere in France is passed over, as little evidence remains of it.) For each country she looks at the musical personalities who managed to get Schoenberg's work programmed and the bureaucratic challenges they faced. Some of these Schoenberg supporters, like Norwegian composer Pauline Hall, were interesting characters themselves and will spur the reader on to learn more about them. Calico then goes through the press reactions to the concerts and notes what political orientation each newspaper had. In Austria and Norway, the piece was performed against a background of widespread denial of any guilt for the persecution of the Jews. Austria defined itself as the first victim of Nazi oppression, in spite of the enormous role that Austrians played in the Holocaust. The German translation used even put the cruel German commandant's dialogue into a distinctly German, not Austrian, form of the language to further disassociate the events described from the country where the work was performed. That widespread denial, along with considerable remaining anti-Semitism, could not help but be reflected in what the critics wrote. Any audience today will recognize "A Survivor from Warsaw" for what it in fact is: a depiction of the persecution of the Jews and a statement of Jewish faith. In the Communist Bloc, however, the Jewish element of the work was initially denied to an overwhelming degree. The piece was depicted instead as a general attack on fascism, commemorating those anonymous masses in Poland who suffered German oppression until the Soviet liberation. Because fascism was now defined, under Soviet pressure, as a late stage of capitalism, and not "Aryan" supremacy and the persecution of ethnic minorities, the work could even be performed as a snub against the Communist bloc's new opponents in the West. As a Russian speaker, who has so often seen the history of Nazi Germany presented in this "de-Semiticized" way, I could understand all too well how Schoenberg's work could be so distorted. But Calico reveals some Cold War intrigues that were completely new to me. In Poland, "A Survivor from Warsaw" was premiered by touring East Germany musicians in a concert that also included two supposedly godawful socialist realist pieces. The background of this Polish premiere was a feud between an uptight Eastern Germany that still followed Stalinist restrictions in the arts and a "thawing" Poland more opened to avant-garde trends at festivals like the Warsaw Autumn. In the Czech Republic, figures sympathetic to Schoenberg sought to evade restrictions on twelve-tone music by hyping the "social dedication" of Schoenberg's works written in his American period, as opposed to the "mistaken" path he followed before his emigration from Europe. This book is unlikely to serve anyone wanting to better understand "A Survivor from Warsaw" itself and its exotic twelve-tone idiom. However, for readers interested in 20th-century European history, the

piece as a case study is fascinating, and it just goes to show how no musical work is ever independent of the place and time it was written or performed.

This book received an honorable mention for the 2016 Laura Shannon Prize in Contemporary European Studies. The jury commended Calico's work "as a searching exploration of the way in which one of the great musical reflections on the Holocaust had been received in the communist countries after the Second World War. The book brought much new information to light, and was particularly illuminating concerning the status of Jews and of art devoted to their suffering during the communist years." The members of the final jury were: Karl Ameriks, McMahon-Hank Professor of Philosophy, University of Notre Dame; John Hare, Noah Porter Professor of Philosophical Theology, Yale Divinity School; Anne Lake Prescott, Helen Goodhart Altschul Professor of English Emerita, Barnard College, Columbia University; Ingrid Rowland, Professor of Architecture, University of Notre Dame; and Roger Scruton, fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C.

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