

Title	Walzer für Streichorchester [Waltzes for String Orchestra] (Fragment)
Time of Origin	1896/97
Premiere	unknown
Duration	ca. 15 min.

1. Kräftig
2. Nicht zu rasch
3. Etwas langsam
4. Etwas rasch
5. Rasch
6. Ohne Bezeichnung
7. Kräftig
8. Getragen
9. Lebhaft
10. Nicht rasch

"I venture to credit myself with having written truly new music which, being based on tradition, is destined to become tradition." Arnold Schönberg's reference to tradition, reflected in his 1931 essay "Nationale Musik," is based on historical necessity, which does not manifest itself in technical or mechanical mastery of the material, but is rather legitimized as an existential dimension through its artistic transgression of boundaries. In addition to superficial references to models of Viennese Classicism in the use of materials and intellectual procedures, Schönberg also positions himself as the successor of Mozart and Beethoven by drawing upon the fateful parallelism of an artist suffering from the ignorance of his conservative environment. Unfettered by academic constraints, Schönberg's own studies of the works of his idols Bach and Mozart ("primarily") as well as Beethoven, Brahms, and Wagner ("secondarily") placed him in a stylistic continuum that he also sought to maintain through his own students.

"Someone had to be, no one wanted to be, so I let it be me" – when did Schönberg become Schönberg? Until the age of seventeen, attempts at composing were limited, according to his own account, to "imitations of such music as I had been able to become acquainted with – violin duets and duet-arrangements of operas and the repertory of military bands that played in public parks." ("My Evolution," 1949) Among the surviving compositions from this period is the "Alliance-Walzer" (Alliance Waltz) for two violins, written in 1882, which the eight-year old composer dedicated to his grandmother. Schönberg received his only lessons in composition from Alexander Zemlinsky, whom he had met in the fall of 1895, and who would later also become his brother-in-law. At that time, Zemlinsky was the director of the Viennese "Musikalischer Verein Polyhymnia," an

amateur string orchestra of about 30 musicians, with whom he rehearsed first at the Hotel Rabl on Fleischmarkt and the Hotel National on Taborstraße, and eventually at the "Große Tabakspfeife" on Goldschmiedgasse. According to Zemlinsky's description, the club orchestra consisted of only "a few violins, a viola, a cello, and a contrabass." Arnold Schönberg, who had quit his job at the Werner & Co. banking house in the summer of 1895, was active in "Polyhymnia" as a cellist whose playing was "as passionate as it was wrong," according to Zemlinsky's 1934 memoir of his youth. On March 2, 1896, the first official orchestral concert of the Viennese "Polyhymnia" took place: the program included works by Alexander Zemlinsky as well as the first public performance of a work by Schönberg.

Schönberg also wrote a series of 10 waltzes for string orchestra (an 11th waltz remained unfinished) presumably for the "Polyhymnia." However, there is no record of a public performance at that time, and it is also uncertain whether a performance in a private setting ever took place. In the absence of either documentary evidence or a date in the autograph manuscript in Schönberg's estate (Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna), the genesis of the waltzes can only be reconstructed by philological means. While the compositional style can certainly serve as a comparative parameter, it is above all the type of music paper that provides valuable information. Schönberg used the 18-line staff paper produced by Joseph Eberle & Co. for a series of compositions of various genres written between March 1897 and July 1898, including the Gavotte and Musette for string orchestra (March 22, 1897) and "Frühlings Tod" after Lenau for large orchestra (July 20, 1898). The typography of the score for the Waltzes contains handwriting similarities to the manuscripts written in 1897, which allows us to presume that the Waltzes for String Orchestra were written between spring and fall of 1897 – something also supported by a stylistic comparison.

Despite the stylistic transformations in the years to come, Schönberg remained loyal to the genre of the waltz even in the more advanced compositions of later years. If one follows the opus numbering of his works, the Waltz, op. 23 No. 5 represents the first work in which the pioneering "method of composition with twelve tones which are related only with one another" is applied. In the Suite, op. 29 and the Orchestral Variations, op. 31, works in which the new method has already been developed, Schönberg also employs the waltz once again in individual movements. In addition to his main compositional output, Schönberg also produced purpose-made arrangements of famous Strauss waltzes during the 1920s. The fact that in Vienna waltzes are primarily conceived with elements of popular songs is attested by the ten charming attempts of the young self-taught composer from 1897. The Viennese waltzes Schönberg wrote in his youth are idiomatically closer to Schubert's dance music, and especially his Ländler, than to those of the Strauss dynasty.

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