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| **Krenek, Ernst** |
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| Ernst Krenek, twentieth century composer, was born in Vienna in 1900. Krenek composed over 240 works from 1917 until 1989, and his career includes works in many genres, including symphonies, operas, chamber music, and music for piano. Krenek was stylistically protean, and indebted at various points to Schubert, Mahler, Bartok, and Schönberg. In 1974, Glenn Gould called Krenek “the most prolific major composer of our time.” |
| Ernst Krenek, twentieth century composer, was born in Vienna in 1900. Krenek composed over 240 works from 1917 until 1989, and his career includes works in many genres, including symphonies, operas, chamber music, and music for piano. Krenek was stylistically protean, and indebted at various points to Schubert, Mahler, Bartok, and Schönberg. In 1974, Glenn Gould called Krenek “the most prolific major composer of our time.” Krenek wrote several symphonies in the 1920s intended to extend the idiom of Mahler Krenek was briefly married to Anna Mahler, the elder composer’s daughter in 1922. He wrote an opera titled “Jonny Spielt Auf” (1927) that mixes jazz motifs in modernist, atonal settings. The Nazis banned this work for its reflection of African-American styles. Krenek’s works of the 1920s are atonal but still melodic; he called this music of his early period “rich in dissonant polyphony.” Beginning with his opera *Karl V* (1930), which engages complex religious and political questions (presenting Karl, a sixteenth-century Hapsburg Emperor, as a Hamlet-like antihero), Krenek began working in music based in 12-tone rows, derived from the theory and works of Arnold Schönberg.  Throughout the rest of his career, Krenek would return to varieties of serialization, often involving 12-tone rows, trying to exploit “the dialectical cohabitation of predetermination and chance” inherent in serialism. An especially strong example of his mid-career work in a serial mode is his Symphonic Elegy to Webern, op. 105.  Another phase of his career, begun in the 1930s, is a neoromanticism indebted to Schubert. Throughout Krenek’s post-1930 career, especially in his piano music, the melodic neoromantic and the edgy, atonal modernist often fruitfully coexist. Krenek moved to America in 1938, and lectured at Vassar College and, later, at several California universities. In the North American period of his life, his name was esteemed, but his music was not well known, as only a small percentage of his works had been recorded by the 1960s; almost all of his works are now available in published recordings. He occasionally integrated electronic and/or taped music into his compositions from the 1950s until the 1970s. Krenek was an aficionado of history, seeking to link theories of sixteenth-century polyphony to modernist, serial ideas; he also wrote, in especially lucid and compelling English, a history of his own music and, incidentally, of twentieth century music, called “Circling My Horizon” in 1974. Krenek died in 1991.  File: Krenek.jpg |
| Further reading:  (Krenek, 1974)  (Krenek, Modal Counterpoint in the Style of the Sixteenth Century: Outline, 1959)  (Stewart, 1991)  (Krenek)  (Krenek, 2012)  (Krenek, 2000)  (Krenek, 2004)  (Krenek, Sonata for Piano No. 3, 1995)  (Krenek, 2009)  (Krenek, 2004) |