

## Announcing a New Publication

### “A MUSICAL LIFE IN TWO WORLDS: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF HUGO LEICHTENTRITT”

*Edited by Mark DeVoto and published by Harvard Musical Association*

**Hugo Leichtentritt** (1874–1951), one of the first academics in America to call himself a musicologist, is known to older musicians in the academy primarily as the author of a 1911 text, *Musikalische Formenlehre*, or in its English version, *Musical Form* (1951). Another book of his, *Music, History, and Ideas*, is still regularly recalled. What has remained unknown until today is his long autobiography, written in the 1940s and only recently discovered in manuscript in the collection of Harvard Musical Association.



Seventy years after he wrote it, Leichtentritt's 621-page, thoroughly indexed memoir reveals a spectrum of personal histories—musical, social, travel and his experience with the Holocaust. It begins with an account of his birth into a prosperous Jewish family and his early life in Pleschen (Pleszew), where despite the fact that the German and Polish citizens could agree on only one thing—that they hated the Jews—he enjoyed a happy and well-schooled childhood. As a teenager Leichtentritt moved with his family to Somerville, Massachusetts, where he attended high school, successfully (and to his later shame) passing as a Christian. He went on to study music at Harvard, graduating in 1894. His account of those years, including biographical sketches of such fellow students and professors as John Knowles Paine, Arthur Foote, George Santayana, William James, and Charles Eliot Norton, evoke Harvard and the musical scene in Boston with sparkling vividness.

Back in the Old World for his advanced degree and professional life as a dedicated exponent of *Musikwissenschaft*, as critic, composer, European traveler, and sophisticated citizen of Berlin, he paints indelible images of a lost era: “Nobody of the younger generation will ever see that grand old city again as it had been... Accordingly I tried to revive the spirit of Berlin by describing my relations to its manifold emanations.” His account of concerts and composers from this period yields up many fascinating insights.

In 1933 Harvard University rescued Leichtentritt from the Nazis by offering him a lectureship, allowing him and his mother to move permanently to Cambridge. His memoir “came into existence in consequence of an appeal made in 1940 by a committee of Harvard professors. All fugitives from Nazi Germany were invited to describe their lives and their experiences under the Hitler regime.” He then expanded his work into an autobiography which broadened his account to the Harvard of the 1940s and the musical life of two worlds.

“The central point around which all these observations and recollections revolve is music. Here is a picture of a vanished world as seen by a musician. Its ravishing beauty is indeed marred by many a dark and ugly spot, its euphonious harmony often changed into shrill and violent discords, the smooth flow and interesting complication of its rhythms has degenerated into a confusion devoid of sense. Yet, with all its imperfections and blemishes this European world of yore has been a kind mother to the art of music, and for this reason mainly it is cherished by the writer of these lines for whom life is music, and music is life.”

*A Musical Life in Two Worlds: The Autobiography of Hugo Leichtentritt* is available in hardcover for \$75 plus shipping from the publisher, Harvard Musical Association, 57A Chestnut Street, Boston, MA 02108. The Association's email is [info@hmaboston.org](mailto:info@hmaboston.org). An order form is below.

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