

# Not everyone was enthusiastic about Ewell's talk

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Dear Schenkerian colleagues,

Not everyone who attended the SMT was enthusiastic about Ewell's talk. I forward a comment I received today from a colleague with some Schenkerian chops:

"The talks at the plenary were demoralizing. I didn't really expect that much, but Philip Ewell's vitriolic attack on Schenkerism as the root of all white racism was disgusting.

He received a standing ovation. They need to read Richard Kramer's *Spectrum* review of the collection of Schenker's correspondence.

It's nice that Ewell cynically discussed intellectual anti-Semitism at the end of his talk, **without mentioning once that Schenker was a Jew**, that all of his Jewish disciples had to flee, that those who did not were murdered by the Nazis (including Schenker's wife and most talented students, i.e., Angelika Elias) and that they were hated here when they arrived. Instead, he accused them of institutionalizing racism in music theory, *precisely* because all of them abhor Schenker's political ideas."

I place in bold type some of the concerning comments.

When I was a student at CUNY, Saul Novack arranged for me to meet privately with Felix Salzer, who had recently retired from teaching because of the onset of dementia. Fortunately, when I visited him in his apartment, he was still almost completely lucid, and I spent the better part of a day just listening to him reminisce about his Vienna years, immigration to the US, studying with Schenker himself in the last year of his life. Later, after Salzer's death, I also met with his wife and had several long conversations with her about related topics. It is a pity that I did not record these discussions. During our conversation, Hans Weisse did not come up. However, I did discuss the topic of anti-Semitism with Weisse's daughter, who died some years ago, and that time I DID videotape the conversation. I need to dig out the tape and digitize it.

The fact of Schenker's Jewishness, and that of most of his students, came up repeatedly in all of these conversations in different contexts. It is of central importance to understanding the reception of Schenkerian Analysis first in Europe, in the period of the rise of Nazism, and then in early post-war America.

I need to listen to Ewell's talk before reacting. However, if it is indeed true that he does not mention Schenker's own Jewish identity, that raises questions.

With best wishes,

Tim

