

10/10

Expression becomes an “ism”

Note that the tension between freedom of expression and structural rigor (the duty to “compose responsibly”) never gets resolved in Schoenberg.

Caligari, the Scream —> distortion as pure expressivity (free of formal constraints) | I mean, it’s crazy...

Rudolph Steiner —> Goetheanum, Waldorf School distortion as liberation pedagogy

Autonomy, Freedom from regulation, cultivation of the individual

Schoenberg considered his music to have the same emancipatory potential

—> Autonomous art:

Art for art’s sake (arte pour l’arte)

not beholden to any particular political, economic, socially-determined interests

but art could be pure freedom —>

expression free of externally determining forces (form, function, etc.)

cp. Cliché of the artist/genius as in the world but “detached” from it.

transcends mere subjective/individual pleasure towards something BIGGER (?)

if atonality/abstract art seems strange the problem is “with you.” That is, it is an attempt to transcend artificial (human) limitations. Schoenberg talks about wanting to breathe the air of other planets.

“all art aspires to the condition of music” (Walter Pater)

why? because music (at least absolute instrumental music) is not about anything concrete; its meaning arises out of its internal coherence — it does not represent the world in the way a painting, story, movie, etc. does. it does not have an external function in the way an architectural structure or gourmet meal does. It is SELF-REFERENTIAL and therefore most free.*

Move towards perfectly self-referential music —> Webern

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Webern Op 21.

Objectives:

Focus on section 1 (mm. 1 - 26). Get students to identify symmetrical features of the piece: double canons, Klangfarbenmelodie, row forms and characteristics (retrograde combinatoriality within the row, which means that the P/R as well as the I/RI forms of the row are identical. The row elides into an inverted row in voice 1, the inversion of these two rows is in voice 2, both on transposition level 9. Voice 3 replicates the row forms in voice 2 twice, but transposed to 5, voice 4 replicates the row forms in voice 1 twice, but transposed to 1), etc.

Order of analysis:

3 concepts from Kostka:

Row Forms
Invariance
Combinatoriality

- 1) The best place for students to find the row is in the violin solo at m. 61.
- 2) Then compare this form of the row to the pitches that occur in m. 1.
- 3) Before long you will find that the violin solo is actually I5.
- 4) Look at the characteristics of the row:

retrograde combinatoriality within the row, which means that the P/R as well as the I/RI forms of the row are identical. Webern: "what rules here is altogether the MOST FAR REACHING RELATIONSHIP which can exist between two forms: they are identical!!!"

- 5) also notice that certain pitches repeat before all 12 are up
- 5) examining this further will reveal 4 voices in a double canon
- 6) then use the slides to give an overview of the structure in each parameter in section 1: pitch, register, Klangfarbenmelodie

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*And yet, because of its internal **formal** coherence, a work of absolute music can be about nothing in particular but embody everything imaginable.

why? — let's take the idea of freedom. When a composer writes an atonal/non-metrical piece of music he/she is free to put the motives in **(almost)** any combination/configuration imaginable. BUT — the piece of music is not "about" freedom, it IS freedom, directly embodied — the freedom to use motives however it strikes the composer. So the composer is **(almost)** completely free,

and by extension so is the material of the piece.

I say **almost** because these composers still wanted the music to be atonal (to avoid tonal references) and so they certainly are not perfectly free in how they combine motives, etc.

compared to composers working under the constraints of tonal/metrical music, atonal/non-metrical composers (Schoenberg, et al.) felt emancipated to follow the “logic” of motivic development.

So much for how a piece can embody freedom. The same could be said of spiritual transcendence, desire, emotion or anything else that would be of interest to a Romantic composer.

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10/12

Webern Form:

look for symmetry (m. 34)
go back and forth <—>

determine where the symmetry stops.

3 sections in 2 halves — “sonata” form?

Look at phantom tonal interval = 4th
not found in row

now look at register:

1 Expo: symmetrical around A

2 Development: 2 canons:

a canon 1 = 2 voices 4th apart each with symmetrical register around 4th
(B-E / E-A)

i composite register of 2 voices Bb3 - Bb6 is symmetrical around
E5

b canon 2 = both voices together create symmetry (like in expo)

3 Recap: symmetrical around Eb