

Webern's Miniatures and Aphorisms, Atonal Music 1909-1914

by

John Keillor

B Mus , University of Victoria, 1993

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the School of Music

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

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ABSTRACT

This thesis concerns the atonal instrumental works of Anton Webern, composed between 1909 and 1914. These works can be divided into two groups: the “miniatures” (Opp. 5, 6, and 7) and the “aphorisms” (Opp. 9, 10, and 11). As analysis shows, the central difference between these two groups of compositions is that the miniatures retain many recognized aspects of musical rhetoric that are abandoned in the aphorisms. Common rhetorical devices such as repetition and contrasts largely disappear in Opp. 9, 10, and 11, in favour of a continuous, organic spinning-out of the possibilities of the opening musical statement. Crucial to this development are Schoenberg’s Op. 19 piano pieces, which provided the inspiration that led Webern from his first atonal style to the next.

Examiners



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for Randall Jordan Lawrence

Introduction

If we want to find historically how tonality suddenly vanished, and what started it, until finally, one day, Schoenberg saw by pure intuition how to restore order, then it was about 1908 when Schoenberg's piano pieces Op 11 appeared. Those were the first "atonal" pieces.

-Anton Webern¹

Webern's output can be broadly categorized into three main phases of musical style. His tonal music began with his juvenilia and continued until his Op 2 in 1909. After that he continued with the music commonly referred to as atonal, though Webern thought atonality to be a "schreckliches Wort" [terrible word], since it suggested music "ohne Tone" [without tones]². Following Schoenberg's discoveries closely, Webern adopted the twelve-tone method in 1924.

The atonal period of Webern is generally known to comprise two main categories of works. The first works from 1909 to 1914 include Opp 3 to 11, which consist of both songs and instrumental music. The other half of this stylistic period, 1914 to 1924, is exclusively dedicated to song. This division was used in Walter Kolneder's authoritative book on Webern³.

It is the atonal music written before World War I that is the subject of this thesis. During this five-year period Webern published three sets of songs and six instrumental works. These instrumental works are Opp 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11 (Op 8 is a pair of songs set to the poems of Rilke). Within these instrumental works we find yet another division, one that has been glossed over by history but that represents a vital stylistic development. Humphrey Searle noted that "the Six Bagatelles for string quartet, Op 9 of 1913, the Five Pieces for orchestra, Op 10 of 1911-13, and the Three Little Pieces for cello and piano, Op 11 of 1914, are the

most concentrated that Webern ever wrote "⁴ I refer to the latter atonal works as aphorisms, and to the less concentrated earlier pieces, Opp 5, 6, and 7, as miniatures. The miniature is a very short atonal piece that maintains many nineteenth-century musical conventions. The aphorism reduces the scale still further and sheds rhetorical musical qualities reminiscent of tonal practice. The present thesis will attempt to compare and explain these two categories.

The first use of the term "miniature" to describe Webern's atonal works is to Adorno's credit ⁵ Kolneder later uses the term "miniature" to describe what will be referred to here as the aphorism, but refers to the "aphoristic brevity" of the same pieces ⁶ The terms "aphorism" and "miniature" are used in this thesis to specify two different kinds of atonal instrumental works. However, they have been used more loosely and indeed even interchangeably by some previous writers. Hans Moldenhauer does so in his definitive Webern biography ⁷ There is no evidence that Webern or Schoenberg used these terms. The distinction, however, is viable and useful. These two types of music, connected but distinct, deserve to be recognized for their differing qualities.

The purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which an aphorism represents a break from the miniature in the context of Webern's music. These labels have apt connotations. The word "miniature" denotes a reduction of scale. And, as will be argued below, Opp 5, 6, and 7 employ tonal elements such as homophonic texture, development of theme, restatement, etc. in a compressed time scale. The syntax is radical but the forms are not.

The aphorisms, Opp 9, 10, and 11, are shorter than the miniatures and much more radical in conception. They harbor fewer vestiges of tonal style.

Although length and texture are reduced to a minimum, the profundity is equal to if not greater than that of the miniatures. One might compare the aphorisms to Nietzsche's *Maxims and Arrows* from Twilight of the Idols.⁸ That is, they reduce utterance to articulate something wondrous, compressing the idea into a few words or notes, each crackling with meaning until supercharged. The enigma spills over, as it were, filling the reader or listener with awe.

Among Webern's published miniatures and aphorisms are pieces for corresponding ensembles. Opp. 5 and 9 are written for string quartet. Opp. 6 and 10 are orchestral works, while Opp. 7 and 11 are works for solo string instrument and piano accompaniment. These parallelisms are fortunate for the analyst interested in comparing these two genres, because the idiom of each ensemble brings out different compositional considerations. Thus the comparison can be rounded and full.

The dates of composition require some degree of explanation for they illustrate how important Schoenberg was to Webern's early creative process. Schoenberg's break with tonality occurred in March and April of 1908 with his song cycle The Book of The Hanging Gardens, Op. 15.⁹ In the epigraph of this chapter, Webern remembers the Six Little Piano Pieces, Op. 11, as coming first. Although Op. 11 came later than the Op. 15 songs, it was in fact the first opus to be completely, not just partially, atonal. At any rate, in the same year Webern produced his own atonal songs (now Opp. 3 and 4) featuring the poems of Stephan George, the same poet whose words Schoenberg set in The Book of The Hanging Gardens. This was symptomatic of a trend in Webern's and Schoenberg's relationship. Simply put, Webern took freely and immediately whatever

innovation his teacher offered up and often recreated that discovery with his own musical voice

Webern wrote his Five Movements for String Quartet, Op. 5, in June of 1909, originally labelling it Op. 3. Webern's first miniatures came into being when he shelved Alladine and Palomides, an opera with a libretto by Maeterlinck, in order to pursue the atonal idiom.¹⁰ This was Webern's first attempt at writing opera. It was begun in 1908 and only one page survives. The notation of the opera includes a key setting of three flats, suggesting a tonal conception. Webern clearly began his atonal works, discarding his tonal projects, as soon as Schoenberg broke with tonal practice.

Schoenberg wrote his famous Five Pieces For Orchestra, Op. 16, between May and August 1909. Subsequently, Webern completed some orchestral works of his own and mentioned them in a letter to Schoenberg dated August 30, 1909.¹¹ These were Webern's Six Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 6 (originally Op. 4). Like his teacher's orchestral pieces, they emphasize Schoenberg's latest innovation Klangfarbenmelodie, or tone-colour melody.

Until the following summer, Webern had no time to compose anything original, being occupied with conducting jobs and transcriptions of Schoenberg's material. Then, in June of 1910, he produced his Four Pieces for Violin and Piano, Op. 7. The following month he began his second attempt at opera. The libretto was The Seven Princesses, again by Maeterlinck.¹² In these compositional acts Webern seems quite free of Schoenberg (or vice versa!) though the older master was kept informed by Webern's letters.

But this compositional autonomy was not to last. Once again, it was

Schoenberg's ingenuity that would halt Webern's attempt at opera. He never completed one.

In February of 1911 Schoenberg wrote five of his Six Little Piano Pieces, Op. 19. The final piece was written in June of that year. The innovation of these pieces, the first aphorisms, lies in their athenatic through-composition and singularity of affect. This last quality of singular affect represents an important break with the romantic aesthetic. Due to the lack of internal contrasts, the effect is closer to that of the baroque style. At this juncture, in the words of Oliver Neighbour, Schoenberg "left this line of thought for Webern."¹³

Webern was compelled to realize Schoenberg's innovations by means of string quartet, perhaps in part because he himself was a cellist. Early that summer he completed four of his six bagatelles (nos. 2,3,4, and 5) with the title *Second String Quartet*. Thereafter, Webern accompanied Schoenberg to Berlin in September to be of use to his master. This act of devotion was preceded by a letter from pupil to teacher in 19 August, 1911, wherein Webern states, "I live only through you."¹⁴ In the summer of 1912 he accepted a position conducting light musical theater in Stettin. This was unbearable to him and he took refuge in the Preglhof, Webern's family estate where most of his atonal music was written.

Another quartet by Webern appeared in July of 1913. The *Three Pieces for String Quartet* included a middle movement for voice performing Sprechstimme, or song-speech. The work encapsulated two more of Schoenberg's innovations, alluding to the combination of voice and string quartet in Schoenberg's Second String Quartet, Op. 10, of 1908, as well as to the more recent Gluckliche Hand of 1910-13 and Pierrot Lunaire of 1912, the pieces in which Schoenberg presented

Sprechstimme to the world. When Webern asked Schoenberg his feelings on the new work, Schoenberg responded that Webern "didn't require his input"¹⁵ Whether it was Webern's obvious riding on Schoenberg's coat-tails or other considerations that irritated the older composer is difficult to say. However, this was enough to change Webern's plans drastically. His initial plan was to release all three of his atonal string quartets as Op. 5, nos. 1, 2, and 3. The chosen alternative was to let the first string quartet stand alone, and to add the outer movements of the third quartet to the second, dropping the inner vocal movement entirely. Hence the planned Op. 5 became Op. 5 and 9 respectively. Schoenberg's glowing preface to Six Bagatelles for String Quartet, Op. 9 (published 1924)¹⁶ testifies to his satisfaction with the work. The impact of Schoenberg's Op. 19 is undeniable. However, Webern took matters further, realizing the special potential of the aphorism.

Webern had also been working on various orchestral movements in the same aphoristic style, begun only a month or so after Op. 9 (July to September of 1911). Many more were completed in the fall of 1913, after the composer underwent psychiatric treatment. Written along with the third and fifth movements of what would become his Op. 6 were many other orchestral works, including one with solo voice. As a Christmas gift, Webern presented Schoenberg with *Four Pieces for Orchestra*, Op. 6. Movements 1, 2, and 4 were later to become 2, 3, and 5 of the Five Movements for Orchestra, Op. 10. The movement with voice was probably discarded because Webern felt self-conscious about the poetry being his own. How and when the final ordering of the orchestral movements came about is uncertain. However, the first and fourth movements came from the

initial inspiration of 1911, the rest from 1913. All remaining orchestral pieces from this period remained lost until 1965, when they were discovered in Perchantoldshof, they were published in 1971.¹⁷

The cello pieces, written in the spring of 1914, were not produced in this prolonged, patchwork-style manner, their story is simpler. Webern wanted to write a cello sonata for his father, something longer and more conservative that his progenitor might easily enjoy. The work completed has survived, and was published in 1972.¹⁸ Webern broke off work on the sonata and finished the Three Pieces for Cello, Op. 11, on May 14, presenting them to his father anyway, thereby concluding the aphoristic phase of his atonal output.

Webern said in 1932, "Our push forward *had* to be made, it was a push forward such as never was before. In fact we have to break new ground with each work. Each work is something different, something new."¹⁹ This statement suggests he would not write until he had something new to say and that he would wait until the time was ripe for a particular medium to be re-explored. One string quartet was written in 1909, yet it was not until 1911-13, when Schoenberg discovered another style, that Webern could use the string quartet again to express something new.

Taken in isolation, this sketch of Webern's compositional history from 1909 to 1914 includes strange, interesting turns and symmetries. Webern twice shelved an opera to write a string quartet that would emulate Schoenberg's discoveries. The string quartets were closely followed by orchestral works. Music for solo instrument and piano accompaniment rounds off each phase of atonal composition. The miniature style was broken off by a second attempt at opera,

while the aphorisms were followed by Webern's retreat into song, a retreat that would last until Schoenberg announced the twelve-tone method in 1923

It was always up to Schoenberg to guide the way, a circumstance that clearly aggravated the older composer. Schoenberg wrote, "He (Webern) kept secret everything 'new' he had tried in his compositions. I, on the other hand, immediately and exhaustively explained to him each of my new ideas (with the exception of the method of composition with twelve-tones--that I long kept secret, because, as I said to Erwin Stein, Webern immediately uses everything I do, plan or say, so that I--I remember my words--'By now I haven't the slightest idea who I am' "20

The very substantial reliance of Webern on his teacher and colleague is deceptive. His vital strength lay in the full realization of Schoenberg's discoveries. This is evident when one considers that it was he who realized the full implications of Schoenberg's Op. 19. Furthermore, it was Webern, not Schoenberg, who captured the full attention of the post-World War II composers with his treatment of the twelve-tone method. Adorno said as much in his article on Berg's discoveries in compositional technique: "What distinguished Webern, unbeknown to himself, from his teacher, Schoenberg, and his friend Berg was the energy with which he emancipated himself from the methods of the traditional musical idiom which survived in their works despite their introduction of new principles of construction "21

No specific or dramatic change occurred in Webern's life that instigated the shift from the miniature to the aphorism except for Schoenberg's compositional breakthroughs. Thus a historical investigation of this sort relies on analysis

rather than extensive biographical reports. William Kinderman has recently written, "The evolution of tonal practice between the music of Beethoven and Schubert in the 1820s and the post-tonal works of Schoenberg and Berg written a century later poses challenges that traditional analytical methodologies and theoretical systems have not fully met"²² Similarly, for the atonal music that continues this tradition, there has yet to be established a satisfactory set of premises upon which to build an analytical model. Even Allen Forte, for all his monumentally influential writing on atonal music, is careful to avoid addressing some of the issues pertaining to compositional process. For example, his article on the first bagatelle begins as follows. "It is not generally known that Webern's atonal music contains traces of what has come to be called the octatonic collection"²³ Forte rightly avoids bringing Webern's compositional intentions into play because no member of the Second Viennese School offered specifics regarding atonal practice. Schoenberg referred to "an emancipation of the dissonance"²⁴ but he did not offer details. "Suspended tonality" [aufgehobene Tonalität] did not elicit extensive explanation.²⁵ Nor did Webern once discuss particulars of atonal writing in the collected lectures of 1933-34.²⁶ At this point he was naturally much more interested in pursuing the twelve-tone method. In addressing atonal music, scholars are not able to utilize any one definitive hearing or analytical method.

Allen Forte has probably made the biggest impact on contemporary atonal analysis. His book The Structure of Atonal Music, which appeared in 1973, outlines what is now the most widespread approach to atonal analysis.²⁷ The strength of Forte's method is in isolating pitch-class sets, in charting every way

that a set can be manipulated, and in accurately labeling the permutations of a pitch-class set throughout an atonal piece. However, limitations exist in his approach. The following quote is taken from pages 11-12 of The Structure of Atonal Music, which illustrates Forte's method at arriving at a pitch-class set labelling. Forte compares two chords, one from Berg's Altenberg Lieder and another from Stravinsky's Symphonies of Wind Instruments. The reductive character of Forte's system determines these two chords to be the same, in spite of substantial differences in the music of Berg and Stravinsky.

Forte comments

To look up the name of a pc set on the list of prime forms it is first necessary to put the set in normal order and then to transpose the normal order so that the first integer is 0.

inversion	[0,10,9,6,3]
ascending order	[0,3,6,9,10]
new normal order	[9,10,0,3,6]
transposed to level 0	[0,1,3,6,9]

The last set displayed above is the best normal order, and the name associated with it on the list of prime forms is 5-31.²⁸

This rather abstract method helps little with considerations of style and will not assist in comparing two styles of atonal music. Ethan Haimo notes that George Perle and Taruskin have also found such analysis less than useful.²⁹ Ultimately, this method of analysis seems more concerned with proving its own consistency than with enlightening the musically interested about unique and characteristic features of specific works. Forte's analytic dominance is solid but limited in scope, it is not a subtle critical tool.

The analytical approach taken in this thesis assumes that vertical intervals (harmony) can serve as a basis for horizontal (melodic) consonance and

dissonance in certain atonal contexts if the texture can be divided into melodic and harmonic components. In other words, the intervals found in a harmony that match those in the melody can create a sense of relative consonance. This is implied in George Perle's discussion of intervallic cells, though it is not an aspect that is emphasized in his own hearings and explanations.

Perle describes the opening of Schoenberg's Five Piano Pieces as follows: "the initial three-note motive in the middle voice (a^b-g-b^b) is followed by its retrograde-inversion in bar 3 (a-c-b) and accompanied by two statements of the retrograde-inversion in the bass (a-c-b and b-d-c[#]). The content of the initial chord (a^b-a-f[#]) is an inversion of the content of the same motive."³⁰ His method emphasizes the cohesive quality of the restatement of motives, which consist of intervals. My argument is much the same, with the emphasis being that melodic intervals not represented in the accompaniment create a kind of relative, expressive dissonance.

Atonal analysis should also address the special importance of chromatic, semi-tonal intervals 11, 1, and 13. Henri Pousseur rightly states, "How then can we regard seconds, sevenths, ninths and so on as identical connections? A functional distinction must be drawn between these various types of interval."³¹ These ideas are crucial to the analytic method of this thesis.

In Webern's miniatures there are vestiges of tonal technique, as was mentioned earlier. That this was a conscious compositional act has been proven by the sketch studies of Felix Meyer and Anne Schreffler on Webern's Op. 7 violin pieces.³² Such tonal remnants can be found in Webern's Opp. 5 and Op. 6 as well. These remnants of tonality play upon the expectations of the listener, creating

dream-like consonances that imply the recently discarded tonality, only to have the archaic function of the triad dissolve in the expanded context of pantonality³³ This writing style did not occur in the aphorisms.

An analytical approach combining aspects of the work of Pousseur, Perle, Meyer, and Schreffler may be more eclectic than elegant. However, the differences between musical aphorism and miniature allow themselves to be addressed by these means. The scope of this thesis is limited to comparative musical analysis. While some readers might feel that the cultural/historical side of this investigation might be underdeveloped, the lack of extra-musical information is deliberate for the sake of successfully proving that the differences between these two atonal styles are really existent, without requiring any other proofs. We shall first consider Webern's string quartets, and then the orchestral works and the music for solo stringed instrument and piano. The following study attempts to shed light on this fascinating and hitherto somewhat neglected period in the evolution of Webern's musical style.

Notes

1 Anton Webern, The Path To The New Music, trans Leo Black, ed. Willi Reich (Vienna: Theodor Presser Co. In association with Universal Edition, 1960), 44.

2 *Ibid.*, 45

3 Walter Kolneder, Anton Webern (Vienna: Elizabeth LaFite, 1974), 48

4 [Humphrey Searle] Anton Webern, Complete Works Juilliard String Quartet, London Symphony Orchestra, Pierre Boulez, a.o., Sony SM3K 45845, p. 16

5 Theodor Adorno, Klangfiguren (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1959), 166.

6 Kolneder, 47-8

- 7 Hans Moldenhauer, Anton Von Webern (New York. Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 64, 190, 198, 206, 208, 263
- 8 Friedrich Nietzsche's *Maxims and Arrows* from Twilight of The Idols were written in 1888. The philosopher's writings were part of Webern's university study (see Moldenhauer, 52). While no conclusive correlation can be drawn, Webern was surely familiar with these arrows and maxims, many of which reflect the spirit of Webern's Opus 9-11 in their utmost compression of an idea.
- 9 Oliver Neighbour, The New Grove Second Viennese School (New York. W W Norton & Company, 1980), 38
- 10 Moldenhauer, 117
- 11 Ibid., 126
- 12 Ibid., 131
- 13 Neighbour, 41
- 14 Moldenhauer, 131
- 15 Ibid., 193
- 16 Arnold Schoenberg, foreword to Sechs Bagatellen fuer Streichquartett, Op 9 by Anton Webern (London. Universal Edition, 1924), 2
- 17 Anton Webern, Orchestral Pieces (1913) (New York. C F Fischer, 1971)
- 18 Anton Webern, Cello Sonata (1914) for Cello and Piano (New York. C F Fischer, 1972)
- 20 Webern, 45
- 20 Arnold Schoenberg, Style and Idea, trans Roy Black (New York. St. Martin Press, 1975), 484. Readers might wish to follow up on Schoenberg's feelings on Webern's almost predatory discipleship in Christopher Wintle's article "Webern's Lyric Character," Webern Studies, ed Katherine Bailey (New York. Cambridge University Press, 1996), 229-263 (esp 230-31)
- 21 Theodor Adorno, Quasi una fantasia, trans Rodney Livingstone (New York. Verso, 1992), 179
- 22 William Kinderman, introduction to The Second Practice of Nineteenth-Century Tonality, ed. William Kinderman and Harald Krebs (Lincoln. University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 1
- 23 Allen Forte, "An Octatonic Essay by Webern. No. 1 of the Six Bagatelles for String Quartet, Op 9," Music Theory Spectrum 16 (Fall 1994), 171
- 24 Arnold Schoenberg, Style and Idea, trans Leo Black (New York. St. Martin Press, 1975), pp 84, 91, 216, 217, 246, 258, 260-61
- 25 Arnold Schoenberg, Theory of Harmony, trans Roy E Carter (London. Faber & Faber, 1975), 128. Here Schoenberg discusses the suspension of tonality but not the implementation of post-tonal technique.
- 26 Webern discusses only briefly the inception of atonality in one lecture. These lectures have already been cited in notes 1, 2 and 20.
- 27 Allen Forte, The Structure of Atonal Music (New York. Yale University Press, 1973)

28 Ibid., 12

29 Ethan Haimo, "Atonality, Analysis and the Intentional Fallacy," Music Theory Spectrum 18 (Fall 1996), 167-99

30 George Perle, Serial Composition and Atonality (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 10

31 Henri Pousseur, "Webern's Organic Chromaticism," Die Reihe (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1955), 55

32 Felix Meyer and Anne Schreffler, "Performance and revision: the early history of Webern's Four Pieces for violin and piano, Op 7," Webern Studies, ed. Katherine Bailey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 135-69

33 "Pantonality" is one term Schoenberg suggested as an alternative to "atonality" Theory of Harmony, 438

Chapter One The String Quartets

Part One Webern's Op 5, no 2

"...atonality is meaningful precisely because of its difference from tonality--a difference that creates an aesthetically crucial disruption of tonal practice "

-John R. Covach¹

Schoenberg wrote three books about music. Their scant reflections on atonality may be disappointing for those studying such music but the comments they do contain can help point toward a fruitful approach for criticism and analysis. He wrote, for instance, "Many examples give evidence that nothing is lost from the impression of completeness if the tonality is merely hinted at, yes, even if it is erased. And--without saying that the ultramodern music is really atonal for it may be perhaps that we simply do not yet know how to explain the tonality, or something corresponding to tonality, in modern music "²

Schoenberg had implicit faith in the comprehensibility of atonal music but did not explain its particulars. Perhaps he could not explain them. Webern maintained that Schoenberg's discovery of atonal music was "ganz intuitiv" [completely intuitive], creating and inventing at the same time ³ Schoenberg proposed a suspended [aufgehobene] or floating [schwebende] means of "working out the tonality "⁴ Examining an atonal movement--at first in parts and then as a whole--affords an understanding of how the suspension of tonality is brought about while the comprehensibility of the music is retained. The issue of which elements of previous music remain and which are discarded is important not only for our understanding of these atonal pieces but also critical to the distinction


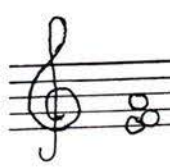

between the miniature and the aphorism

Much post-tonal analysis takes the melody and harmony together as an indivisible totality, like the Perle example in the introduction. The approach in the present study regards the melody and harmony as separate where feasible, but interacting with each other to create a sense of relative consonance and dissonance. The tonal practice of juxtaposing or stacking melody and harmony, which remains in effect in miniature-style Webernian atonality, suggests Webern's compositional intent and offers us an analytic point of departure.

In Webern's atonal music dissonance is different from dissonance in tonal music. Dissonance occurs when melodic intervals are different from those found in the harmony. Vestiges of tonality are dissonant, especially unchromatic or triadic chords. Additionally, octave doublings create an emphasis of certain notes that is dissonant to the regular chromaticism of Webern's atonality.

The sense of atonal consonance or dissonance is established by the intervals in the harmony in relation to those of the melody.

Example 1

	inversion 1	inversion 2
		
$a -- e^1 = 7$ $a -- f^1 = 8$	$e^1 -- f^1 = 1$ $e^1 -- a^1 = 5$	$f^1 -- a^1 = 4$ $f^1 -- e^2 = 11$

The intervals contained in the chord above are 1, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 11⁵. I consider a melody performing these same intervals over the chord relatively consonant. The

intervals 2, 3, 6, 9, or 10, however, would be dissonant in relation to this harmony. If any of the melody notes double (are the same as) those found in the harmony, the chromatic soundscape is compromised, drawing the ear's attention to particular notes instead of delegating equal emphasis to each note, and yielding a sort of dissonance. Doubling and other remnants of tonality, such as unchromatic chords and harmonies that sound pseudo-tonal, generate moments of tonal weight in a weightless atonal atmosphere. This contrast--from weightlessness to weight--is a source of expressive tension that Webern employs regularly in his miniatures.

Example 2, Op 5, no 2, bar 1

Webern 5 MOVEMENTS FOR STRING QUARTET, OP 5 Used with kind permission of European American Music Distributors Corporation, sole U.S. and Canadian agent for Universal Edition A.G., Wien

In Example 2 the chord (in the cello and second violin) includes all intervals except 2 and 10. The melodic intervals, 4 and 6, are contained in the harmony and are therefore, in a sense, consonant.

No tonal relationship between the melody and harmony can be heard in the example above. No notes in the viola double those in the chord. Any triads that might be picked out (G major, D minor, etc.) are diluted by chromatic notes that annul the possibility of tonality. For example, the A^b and A natural render the G

triad unrecognizable. Whether or not this is a conscious disruption of tonality--as the quotation at the beginning of this chapter would suggest--or a post-tonal sound naturally flowing out of an already established distance from tonality is difficult to say. The chromatic tones are working both as a kind of binding negation of tonality and as a common sound that gives the movement a consistent texture. This complex quality of chromatic function was touched upon by Schoenberg as noted by Rosen: "... minor seconds of the superimposed chord are generally in a different register from the notes they heighten, and--what is even more important for our argument here--according to Schoenberg, who confesses to not understand why, they do not sound like minor seconds--that is, they do not sound like dissonances, and they imply no need for resolution ... The filling out of the chromatic space is clearly a movement toward stability and resolution."⁶ Chromatic intervals are indeed vital to this music. In the following example, semitonal harmony resolves the section at the end of bar 4.

Example 3, Op. 5, no 2, bars 2-4

Webern 5 MOVEMENTS FOR STRING QUARTET, OP. 5 Used with kind permission of European American Music Distributors Corporation, sole U.S. And Canadian agent for Universal Edition A.G., Wien

In Example 3 a relative state of dissonance is heard because of a discrepancy between the intervals in the harmony and the melody. The chord--G-

e^b - a -- is less inclusive than the opening four-note chord shown in Example 2, involving interval classes 2, 4 and 6 only. Bar 2 begins with a descending 3 (still in the viola) which sounds as the first dissonant interval. In bar 3 the ascending $c\#1$ - d^2 is also not in keeping with the chord.

But there are other sources of expressive tension here. The G- E^b -A chord in bars 2-3 does not include any intervals 1, 11 or 13 and thus stands in contrast to the other, more chromatic chords. Finally, the g' tied through bars 2-3 doubles the cello, momentarily adding tonal weight that clashes with the atonal context. The second half of the third bar lets the tension ebb, the chord C $\#$ -B-G supports a consonant descending interval 2 (d^2 - c^2) and no note in the melody doubles the harmony. In bar 4 the lower strings perform a counterpoint of consistent chromatic tones to assert the idiomatic necessity of semitones as the movement's opening section closes at the end of the bar with a *ritardando*.

Immediately following the cadence begins another section and a return to atonal dissonance.

Example 4, Op. 5, no 2, bars 5-6

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The varying means of creating dissonance found in Example 3 are transformed in

these two bars. This transformation creates different levels of tension. Harmonically, a sort of palindrome is at work. There are five chords in Example 4, the first and last being the same, as are the second and penultimate. The middle chord--the first of bar 6--is unique. The outer chords (F-B-f#-c1) contain two chromatic dyads, consonant with the prevailing chromatic syntax. The second pair of chords (F#-B-g) maintain only one chromatic dyad and thus, while still consonant, are somewhat less so than those previously mentioned. The central-chord (F-c#-a) contains no chromatic dyads. It is comparatively more dissonant as an atonal harmony yet comparatively consonant as an augmented triad in the tonal idiom. This kind of atonal dissonance is therefore a relative consonance in a different musical language. The augmented triad sits like an abandoned temple to a dead faith, devoid of function, a relic of tonality.⁷ Atonal harmony lacks the ability to shape the musical narrative as effectively as tonality. When an unchromatic chord is heard in a Webernian miniature the listener is reminded of the persuasive musical inertia of tonality. However, such persuasive inertia, fueled by triadic harmony, is incongruous with the free-floating quality of atonality.

In the second segment of the solo violin melody in Example 4 the tension is maintained by another loose palindrome between consonant and dissonant intervals. The second half of bar 5 begins with the second violin playing an interval 6 (dissonant in context of the supporting chord) which is followed by a consonant 8. Bar 6 continues with a consonant 4, and then a dissonant 3. This level of tension inverts the axis effect created by the chords, almost maintaining a sort of musical irony. The chords of this episode flow from consonance to

dissonance to consonance again while the tension of the melody in the second violin flows in the opposite direction

Finally, the doubling of the ascending 1 (d²-d³--eb²-eb³) in the upper strings at the beginning of the example is dissonant because the tonal weight of doubling is contrary to the prevailing style. At the end of the example the same notes are repeated but only in the first violin (d³-eb³) as an undoubled and therefore consonant interval class 1. The section's conclusion reminds the listener of the dissonance at the beginning of the example, repeating the opening motive to round off the section without the opening's tension.

This "rounding off" of the section is also harmonically supported by the second violin's doubling of the cello's F in bar 6. This doubling, recalling the memorable d-e^b doubling at the beginning of the example, is "resolved" when the second violin's f¹ falls to e¹ at the end of bar 6, resulting in an idiomatic interval class 1. Webern alludes to the section's initial tension, then resolves that tension.

Example 5, Op. 5, no 2, bars 7-9

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The penultimate section, shown in Example 5, contains the same ebb and flow of dissonance as the previous example, albeit executed in a very different

manner. Consonant chromaticism begins the section with e^{b3} (tied over from the previous bar)- d^2 . The second violin continues with $d^{\#2}$ - e^2 , moving on to a rhythmically irregular, e^{b1} - f^1 ostinato that continues throughout the section. As well, the second violin's e^2 , which immediately precedes the ostinato, chromatically diverges to the e^{b1} that begins the ostinato and to the viola's f^1 . The f^1 then falls to e , chromatically complementing the e^{b1} - f^1 ostinato at its inception.

The end of the ostinato is also heavily saturated with chromaticism. The linear, semitonal movement f^1 - e^1 concludes the ostinato. This final e^1 is accompanied by a chromatic e^{b1} in the cello. This bracketing of sections with intensive chromatic treatment (the highest form of atonal consonance) is common to both Example 5 and Example 4.

Like Example 4, Example 5 is also divided in the middle. From the second half of bar 7 to the first half of bar 8 the first violin plays a straightforward tune, the opening interval of which (a^1 - b^1) is consonant with the interval class 2-based ostinato. The following 9 (b^1 - $g^{\#2}$) is dissonant against the ostinato but relates to the second half of Example 5, where more ascending 9s occur. A chromatic, descending $d^{\#2}$ - d^2 completes the first half of the example.

The second half of Example 5 is written in imitative counterpoint, an ascending 4 in the first violin (a^1 - $c^{\#2}$) is imitated by the viola's d^1 - $f^{\#1}$ in bars 8-9, and, more freely, in bar 9, ascending 9's occur in the first violin (g^1 - e^2) and again in the cello ($f^{\#}$ - e^{b1}). The intervals are not consonant with the 2-based ostinato. This reinforces what has been happening throughout the movement, sections proceed in a consonance-dissonance-consonance scheme. More importantly, each section has a distinct character and texture or variation of this scheme.

The final section proceeds forward to total consonance while encapsulating many of the elements of the preceding episodes

Example 6, Op 5, no 2, bars 10-13

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The first two bars of Example 6 offer extended consonance, enacting repose as the end approaches. The beginning and end of the first violin's gentle arabesque in bars 10-11 is chromatic within itself, beginning in bar 10 with f^1-e^1 and ending bar 11 with $b-c^2$. The supporting chord includes all melodic intervals except 2 and 10, as did the opening chord. Every melodic note is related chromatically to those of the harmony C-A-e, a minor triad.

The arabesque ends in bars 11-12 with a descending c^2-bb^1 that is immediately imitated in the second violin an octave lower. The doublings C-c¹ and $bb-bb^1$ at the beginning of bar 12 are but a departing glimpse of dissonance that fades to silence, recapitulating one of the many expressive techniques used earlier. The technique of ostinato appears again in the final two bars, where bb , db^1 and eb^1 are repeated in the second violin to conclude the movement.

At this point one must take stock of the basic materials of a Webernian miniature. As Pousseur writes, "Anyone who devotes a little attention to any

work of Webern's will be struck by the extraordinary nature of the simplest sound relationships."⁸ One of the initial elements is contrast. Examples 3, 4 and 5 present three different ways of proceeding in a contiguous but athematic manner. Considering the lack of functional harmony, theme or meter--in the context of the movement's brevity--the choices were limited. But, all things being equal (or at least more equal) in atonality, simple variances account for significant differences. The chords in Example 3 are staggered by rests of varying durations. Example 4 involves almost non-stop chords that run in an A-B-C-B-A pattern and Example 5's accompaniment is an ostinato. Melodic register is involved in the variance as well, in Example 3 the melody is in the viola, in Example 4 it is in the second violin and in Example 5 the final notes of a melody initiated by the first violin, are imitated by the viola, then, more freely, by first violin and cello.

What holds together a movement that is athematic, ametric, atonal and bound up in contrasts? Certainly, in Pousseur's words, the "organic chromaticism" creates "a chromatic *chain* of connection,"⁹ while remnants of tonality also provide coherence. The following harmonic synopsis of the movement is not intended to exhaust the tonal possibilities of the harmony but rather to explore its "experiential effect,"¹⁰ which supplies a cohesive framework not offered by metric or melodic recurrence.

Two means by which vestiges of tonal practice assert themselves are the repetition of chords and the presence of chords that have a place in the tonal vocabulary. These chords serve as landmarks that orient the listener yet possess neither "tonal function" nor "linear function" as defined by Wallace Berry.¹¹ They do not have the living power to direct the music as in functional harmony. Tonal

harmony, at least in the case of Webern's miniatures, acts as a network of organizing signals, comparatively "dead" but vital as an additional or accenting level of organization

Example 7, chords found in Op 5, no 2

The image shows two staves of handwritten musical notation. The first staff, labeled ①, contains 'Bar 1' with a vertical chord of G, B \flat , and D. This is followed by a double bar line and three chords labeled 2a, 2b, and 2c. The second staff, labeled ④, contains 'Bars 10-13' with a vertical chord of G, B \flat , and D. This is followed by a double bar line and five chords labeled 3a, 3b, 3c, 3b, and 3a. The chords are represented by circles on a five-line staff with notes and accidentals.

Numbers 1 and 4, the first and last chords of the movement, could be heard as minor chords with added semitone neighbours, in D and A respectively. While the first chord is entirely vertical, the second's added neighbour occurs linearly in the viola at the beginning of bar 11. Hence the movement begins and ends with similar tonal allusions. The harmonic palindrome (#3) is an example of an identifiable repetition of tones not only stacked identically, without inversion, but also at the same pitch level.

Finally, bars 2-3 involve another method of cohesion. Chords 2a and 2b have the same structure, the second being a transposition of the first. Chord 2c includes two tones found in 2b (G and B) and one from 2a (G). Furthermore, 2c, excepting the B \flat , is the same as the chord 3b, dovetailing the two sections. Audible harmonic connections lend coherence to the movement to some degree while offering contrast as well.

The miniature is built out of contrast, repeating harmonies and their

transformations. This formal category still involves relationships to earlier music which had utilized these same procedures. As will be demonstrated, the aphorism sheds many of these qualities to herald a new form.

Part Two: Schoenberg's Op. 19, no. 2

"Whatever one says, no words can do justice to this music", Webern wrote of Schoenberg's 'Little Piano Pieces' (op. 19) which were nearest to his own music. Recourse to any existing forms proves impossible from the start since Webern's music denies them."

-Theodor Adorno¹²

Adorno's understanding of Webern's music was sometimes problematic. Without a doubt, Schoenberg's Op. 19 decisively inspired Webern's shift from the miniature to the aphorism. However, some of the most vital innovations born out of the aphorism were wholly and independently brought to light by Webern himself. Webern's originality was not fully appreciated by Theodor W. Adorno, a compositional student of Berg, member of the Frankfurt School, noted music critic and a fierce advocate of Schoenberg.

Adorno wrote, "It is necessary only to compare such related works as Schoenberg's Pieces [Op. 19] and Webern's Five Movements for String Orchestra [Op. 5] to become aware of Schoenberg's sovereignty. Whereas Webern binds Expressionistic miniatures together by means of the most highly subtle motivic development, Schoenberg--who had fully developed every possible motivic device--ignores them and follows, with eyes closed, that direction indicated to him by the progression of tones."¹³ Adorno's reputation and influence are of such magnitude that almost any words he offered about Webern's atonal works should

be considered. They were few in comparison to his writings about the music of Schoenberg and Berg. In fact, the above quotes are the bulk of what he published on the subject, which attests to how little he was actually concerned with these works, and hence the rather unclear quality of his criticisms. While Adorno is completely right in tracing a vital connection between Webern's progress and Schoenberg's Six Little Piano Pieces, his claim that Op. 19 was composed "with eyes closed" suggests a lack of conscious compositional process which is no longer evident at this stage of Schoenberg's career.¹⁴ Schoenberg's Op. 19 had a direct effect on Webern's compositional style and it was Webern who saw those innovations to their logical conclusions. The main outcome of this period consisted of Webern's aphorisms.

The second movement of Schoenberg's Op. 19, for all its comparative simplicity, illustrates some characteristic features of the music.

Example 8, Op. 19, no. 2, bars 2-5



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The harmonic premise at work here is one of conflict between the intervals 3 and 4. The ostinato in Example 8 includes twelve statements of the dyad g^1-b^1 (4) and two statements of c^2-e^b2 (3). The melody plays against the presence of these two intervals, beginning by spelling out the intervals of contention. The

penultimate eighth-note in bar 2 is a vertical 3 dyad (b^2-d^3) which is followed by an $f\#^1$, itself forming an interval of class 4 with the preceding d^3 . The $d\#^1$ on the first beat of bar 3 is a distance of 3 semitones from the previous $f\#^1$. The following three notes, $a-c^1-a^b$, again present intervals 3 and 4. Thus the identity of the contentious intervals is made clear. Over the course of the movement one of the intervals will gain in prominence while the other interval will become comparatively submerged.

Bar 5 brings an increase in tension. Above the c^2-e^b2 dyad in the ostinato is the chord $g^b2-b^b2-f^b3$, which is registrally related to the b^2-d^3 dyad at the end of bar 2. The overt 4 interval between g^b2 and b^b2 , sounding in a register where an interval of 3 previously appeared, sounds above one of the few 3s in the ostinato and is followed by another 4 ($f\#-a\#$).

4 is gradually negating 3. In Schoenberg's aphoristic movement one interval holds the listener fast while another enters the soundscape, prevalent enough to instigate a relative dissonance. One dominant interval will end the work, offering the listener a sense of closure.

Example 9, Op. 19, no 2, last two bars



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The dominant interval here is clearly 4. The three dyads in the left hand are 4's, the same holds true for the right hand's g^1-b^1 . Completing the movement

is a chord containing both intervals 3 and 4, acting as a summation of the conflict. 3 appears twice ($e^{b2}-f^{\#2}$ and g^1-b^b2) but these 3's are not as clearly heard as the 4's at the bottom and top (g^1-b^1 and b^b2-d^3 , respectively). These intervals are more readily audible as they occur at the extremes of the chord.

While the final chord's g^1-b^1 has been heard consistently throughout the movement, this should not lead to the assumption that the vestiges of tonality play the same role in aphorisms as they do in miniatures. As Kenneth L. Hicken points out, "The composition as a whole does not have a principal centre, but is related rather to the succession itself"¹⁵. As will be seen in the study of Webern's second bagatelle, no harmonic grounding of the type that occurred in the miniature will assist us in grasping the coherence of the aphoristic style.

But what primary traits in this movement by Schoenberg will find their way into Webern's music? Perhaps most striking is the lack of contrasting sections, the use of little more than two phrases suggests a period full enough to constitute an entire movement. This musical idea, the period, hitherto regarded as a component rather than a complete form, is ennobled to constitute a whole work¹⁶. The Opp. 9, 10 and 11 by Anton Webern are super-charged gestures, fragments layered with interlocking coherences until they become totalities. That is the nature of the aphorism.

Part Three: Webern's Op. 9, no 2

There have been many prevalent musical forms in history: sonata, *da capo* aria, fugue, rondo and so on. These forms are identifiable for their components, structures and textures. Much of our musical canon consists of works that easily

lend themselves to such labels. Others, such as the finale of Beethoven's Ninth or the late symphonies of Mahler, do not conform so easily. While these works broke many conventions of form, they are still referred to as symphonies because their breaks with convention do not negate the category. The symphonic poem, on the other hand, with its use of symbolic programs, demanded a different descriptive concept or label.

The qualities that distinguish a sonata from a rondo--or combine to create the sonata-rondo--are relatively familiar and can be easily (if loosely) explained. Webern's atonal music has not been the subject of such extensive scholarship and few writers have developed opinions that do not risk falling immediately into tautology or cliché. The Webernian aphorism is different both from his miniatures and from Schoenberg's Op. 19. As a foundation for constructive discussion about the atonal period we should inquire into the basic tenets of these different musics found under the label "atonal".

Schoenberg's aphorism Op. 19, no. 2 involves a clash of two intervals in a consistent, non-contrasted texture. Much the same occurs in Webern's aphorisms, except the emphasis on interval clashing. Instead, non-chromatic intervals are poised against chromatic connections. There is the added consideration of different musical elements juxtaposed and then heard simultaneously, so that in essence the form of the compressed piece is identical to that of the intervallic considerations themselves.

Example 10, Op. 9, no.2, bars 1-2

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The above opening bars contain not only the intervals but also other musical elements to be worked through in the movement. In the initial succession e^1 - a^1 - $g^{\#2}$, the listener experiences interval 5 as well as a chromatic 11. This second violin line sets a musical precedent for several upcoming possibilities:

1. A musical line performed consistently in one instrument,
2. An ostinato performed consistently in one instrument.

In beats 3-5 of the first bar the rest of the instruments are heard. The viola's f harmonic precedes the cello's b^1 (*pizzicato*). Following this sonority is an $f^{\#1}$ (first violin), g (second violin) and a repeated b - $a^{\#1}$, *spiccato* double-stop in the viola. In these beats other components of the unfolding soundscape are introduced:

3. A musical line performed with a different instrument per note,
4. A variance of the type of attack per note,
5. Layering of notes in different instruments,
6. Repeated notes.

These basic elements predetermine the material that will be juxtaposed and combined. In the absence of accompanied melodies, aphorisms require that such basic elements take on a new significance. The result is a concealed lyric quality pervading a sectionless soundscape, yielding the musical fragment more power than could normally be expected.

The intervals chosen closely balance the chromatic with the non-chromatic. The speed and brevity of the movement forecloses any tonal or intervallic foothold for the listener. Non-chromatic tones infuse the chromatic with the freedom to move outside of the half-step. Still, the expression of the Webernian aphorism is in playing out the consequences of the most basic of musical materials constructed from "a network of chromatic connections" ¹⁷

The music of the second bar is born from the materials stated in the first bar. In the second bar, the first violin's ostinato grows from the second violin's statement in bar 1, wherein tones in one single, continuous voice (#2 in the above list) are heard. Meanwhile, the lower strings repeat the notes, mimicking both the repeated dyad in the viola (#6) and the stacking of notes in different timbres (#5). These techniques continue in the following measures (Example 11)

Example 11, Op 9, no 2, bars 3-5

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Bar 3 presents a reconfiguration of the musical materials offered in the preceding example. The viola's ostinato is like that found in bar 2 but widened in interval from 2 to 17. In the last beat of bar 3 an a^b is heard *pizzicato* in the first violin to begin a melody in differing instruments (#3), as was briefly hinted at in the latter half of the first bar. These elements provide the context for bars 4 and 5.

The ostinatos, with their widening breadth from 2 to 17, provide some of the basis for the first species, chorale-like contrasting motion between the first violin and cello in bars 4-5 which begins with F and c^4 , a span of 52. The progressively widening ostinatos lead to the two widely separated voices playing against each other. Perhaps equally important to this development is the opening of the movement in which a melody (or motif) is heard in one instrument. Thus, in this musical context, both melody and ostinato are combined.

As these voices in contrary motion unfold, beginning at the last beat of the third bar, a melody is heard amongst different instruments: first violin a^b (*pizzicato*), cello $c^\#$ (*pizzicato*), viola c^2 , cello d^1 (*pizzicato*), first violin e^{b2} (*pizzicato*), second violin $b^3-f^\#1-g$, viola $g^\#1-e1-a^2-f^2$ (a *pizzicato* permutation of the opening notes of the movement). This loose alternation between *pizzicato* and *arco*, between constant reconfiguration of instruments in a melody and the consistent notes performed by one player, emphasizes and encapsulates the options of execution that go beyond the chorale-like melody in the first violin and cello. The final sonority of bar 5--the repetition of a dyad ($d^{b1}-c^2$)--is played in the second violin and cello.

cello
VIOLA ?

Bars 4-5 represent the climax of the movement because, syntactic matters aside, all the elements presented in the opening bars have been brought together in a critical moment that demands the utmost of the listener. This kind of expressive tension, combining musical ideas, is more important than that created by the syntax, which is comparatively static. Because there is so little in the way of a melodic/harmonic relationship at work in Webern's bagatelles, other means of comparative consonance and dissonance must be exploited.

Example 12, Op. 9, no 2, bars 6-8

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The concluding bars relax the degree of extreme density which peaked in measures 5-6 of Example 11. The urgency of the opening, created by the accumulation of voices performed simultaneously and by the rhythmic diminutions of the second bar, is not present. However, all the elements present within the opening bars assert themselves here:

1. A musical line performed in one instrument (cello $e-f^1$ in bar 6),
2. An ostinato in one voice (viola $b-d^1-b$ and first violin $c^2-b^1-c^2$ in bar 7),
3. A musical line split between different instruments (cello b^2 to the second

violin c#2 in bar 7),

- 4 A different manner of attack (regular alternation between *pizzicato* and *arco*),
- 5 Layering of notes in different instruments (*tutti* chord at the beginning of bar 6),
- 6 Repeated notes (viola d¹ and first violin b¹ at the end of bar 6).

Furthermore, the first violin and viola enact a tiny first species counterpoint chorale-like figure in the beginning of bar 7. This gesture relates to the larger example of this pattern found in bars 4-5, which is easily identifiable due to the contrary motion. The music makes clear that this passage is not only an ebb of the tension heard in the previous example but that it has also--so to speak--lived through the process of the larger contrary motion climax in bars 4-5.

* * *

As was mentioned earlier, there was no one event or chain of events that influenced this change in Webern's style. In the words of Cholopowa and Cholopow, "For Webern, the concept of art had its origin in the classical-romantic period of German music. Aesthetic and philosophical literature were less important than the experience shaped by great masterworks of the past."¹⁸ Webern was to a great extent detached from the ongoing debates surrounding the nature of contemporary art in Vienna. "Not aesthetics, but natural law" was an important theme of Webern's own lectures.¹⁹ Nature was his sanctuary and it was in pastoral, rural settings where he was most comfortable, not the cafés and salons that hosted the ongoing aesthetic dialogue. His immediate impetus was of

course his response to Schoenberg's musical direction. Webern is not known to have discussed "expressionism." When Henri-Louis Matter compares Webern's atonal developments to the abstractions of Kandinsky and Malovich,²⁰ the relationship between these painters and the composer seems at least in part to be imposed upon Webern by the historian. While the spirit of the times encouraged meaningful connections between painters and composers, such things did not much preoccupy Webern. He was neither very social or, apart from literature, especially extra-musical in his interests. Thus, very little can be regarded as having contributed to this change from the miniature to the aphorism (besides the Six Little Piano Pieces by Schoenberg). Without cultural or historic events to act as a setting to such a change, only the music remains. The Six Bagatelles for String Quartet, the first Webernian aphorisms, rendered description and/or criticism almost impossible due to their exclusive and radically expressed nature. The direct witnesses of the scene, Schoenberg and Webern himself, could hardly express anything about this music except to articulate their awe.

Schoenberg wrote: "Consider what moderation is required to express oneself so briefly. You can stretch every glance out into a poem, every sigh into a novel. But to express a novel in a single gesture, a joy in a breath--such concentration can only be present in proportion to the absence of self-pity."²¹ Webern said about the same music: "It sounds grotesque, incomprehensible, and it was incredibly difficult. The inner ear decided absolutely rightly that the person who had written out the chromatic scale and crossed off individual notes was no fool,"²² and, "Some remarkable things were involved in this--they didn't arise from theory but from listening."²³

One must describe the Op. 9 as a collection of movements which are one breath each, quite free of sectional construction. The sound is that of a fragment of music infused with such a degree of interconnections, chromatic and otherwise, that the experience of listening to it becomes complete. An aphorism is a single supercharged gesture rather than a collection of gestures.

Even the term "gesture" is a rather imprecise word in this context, since it suggests a musical moment that sticks in the memory, such as the opening four notes of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony or the strings statement in bars 100-103 from the first movement of Schoenberg's Five Pieces for Orchestra.²⁴ A gesture can be regarded for our purposes as a complete or incomplete component of a movement or section. The very slipperiness of the term makes it useful in describing Webern's aphorism, since these pieces have few parallels. In fact, in speaking of the aphorisms in this manner, the term "gesture" may begin to acquire a more complete definition. The miniature, for all its brevity, is constructed of tiny sections, small enough to be called gestures themselves. Hence the aphorism, without contrasts or sectional construction, may be regarded as one supercharged gesture.

The aphorism, as a supercharged gesture, does not require that harmony play upon the memory of the listener. It must be through-composed. A rough sketch of the main harmonic/intervallic sequence of events in Op. 9, no. 2, is shown in Example 13. It depicts only a very general suggestion of the distribution.

Example 13, chords found in Opus 9, no 2

The image shows handwritten musical notation for Example 13, consisting of two staves of music. The first staff contains four bars, labeled 'Bar 1' through 'Bar 4'. The second staff contains four bars, labeled 'Bar 5' through 'Bar 8'. Each bar contains a chord represented by circles with notes and accidentals (sharps and flats) indicating the specific notes and their alterations. The notation is handwritten and appears to be a sketch or a study of chords.

There is no audible recurrence of harmonic connection here, such as was heard in the second movement of the Op 5. Op 9, no 2 is harmonically through-composed. Thus while the miniature, like most music, sounds constructed, the aphorism sounds secreted.

In this quality lies the true innovation of the aphorism. For Webern, it is also the first real attempt at total athematicism. The comprehensibility of the aphorism lies in its total, immediate and unrelenting causality of construction. There is no dialectic to the aphorism, only concentration, which produces an almost baroque singularity of affect.

Like the music itself, the term aphorism is appropriately concise, and the comparison to the spoken or written aphorism is appropriate. The Chinese say, "The man with no shoes weeps. The man with no feet comforts him." With so many inferences and points to ponder, the words crackle with concentrated meaning until enigma spills from their utterance. But the enigma is not illogical or empty. That is why these statements, laden with simple truths, will not be forgotten. The word aphorism comes from aphorismos, which is Greek for "definition". If Op 9, no 2 is a Webernian definition of what music actually is, Op 5, no 2 is a brief narrative on the same subject. Both works are persuasive

and continue to capture our imagination

Notes

- 1 John R. Covach, "Schoenberg's Turn to the "Other World," Music Theory Online 5 (Sept 1995), 5
- 2 Arnold Schoenberg, Theory of Harmony, trans by Roy E. Carter (London: Faber & Faber, 1922), 128-29
- 3 Anton Webern, Der Weg zur Neuen Musik/Der Weg zur Komposition in 12 Tönen (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1960), 47
- 4 Schoenberg, Theory of Harmony, 128
- 5 Each number is the equivalent of that many semitones. Therefore, "4" equals four semitones, which is more commonly known as a major third. This principle applies to any octave. For example, 4 is harmonically equal to 16 or a major tenth. 4 is recognized as an interval class that includes 8 (4's inversion) and their equivalents in any range. For more information on post-tonal theory, refer to Joseph N. Straus's Introduction to Post - Tonal Theory (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990)
- 6 Charles Rosen, Schoenberg (New York: Viking Press, 1975), 60
- 7 Of course, the augmented triad was recognized only at a late stage of tonal development, and as an "alien guest," in Weitzmann's formulation, see R. Larry Todd The Second Practice of Nineteenth-Century Tonality, 153-77
- 8 Henri Pousseur, "Anton Webern's Organic Chromaticism," Die Reihe, trans. Humphrey Searle (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1955), 52
- 9 *Ibid.*, 53
- 10 Wallace Berry, Structural Functions in Music (New Jersey: Englewood Press, 1976), 162
- 11 *Ibid.*, 29
- 12 Theodor Adorno, Anton Webern, ed. Friedrich Wildgans, trans. Humphrey Searle and Edith Temple Roberts (London: Calder and Boyers, 1966), 167
- 13 Theodor Adorno, Philosophie der neuen Musik (Frankfurt: Ullstein Buch, 1958), 112
- 14 Schoenberg attempted to externalize the subconscious directly, in a non-intellectual manner, up until his Die glückliche Hand, Op. 18. Refer to Jelena Hahl-Koch's, ed. Arnold Schoenberg Wassily Kandinsky, Letters, Pictures and Documents, trans. John C. Crawford (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 184-86

- 15 Kenneth L Hicken, Schoenberg's Six Little Piano Pieces, Op. 19 (Winnipeg Frye Publishing, 1984), 2
- 16 Chopin did the same thing with, for example, his Preludes
- 17 Pousseur, 52
- 18 "Der Begriff der Kunst hat in seiner Gesamtheit für Webern seinen Ursprung in den Auffassungen der klassisch-romantischen Periode der deutschen Musik und ist weniger durch das Studium ästhetisch-philosophischer Literatur als vielmehr unmittelbar durch das Erlebnis der grossen Meisterwerke der Vergangenheit geprägt " Valantina Cholopowa and Juri Cholopow, Anton Webern. Leben und Werk (Berlin Henschelverlag, 1989), 170
- 19 Webern, 11
- 20 "A ce point de l'évolution (décidément très rapide) du langage, Webern substitue à la logique {narrative} une autre logique, très proche de celle qui régit les compositions abstraites de Kandinsky et de Malevitch " Henri-Louis Matter, Webern. l'age d'homme (Montreux l'Imprimerie Ganguin et Laubschner S.A , 1981), 41
- 21 Arnold Schoenberg, forward to Six Bagatelles for String Quartet by Anton Webern, trans Humphrey Searle (London: Universal Edition, 1923), 2
- 22 Webern, 51
- 23 Ibid , 42
- 24 Arnold Schoenberg, Five Pieces for Orchestra (Frankfurt C F Peters, 1922), 13

Chapter Two: The Orchestral Works

Part 1: Schoenberg's Klangfarbenmelodie

The word Klangfarbenmelodie [tone colour melody] was coined by Arnold Schoenberg in connection with his Five Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 16 of 1909. When this work was revised in 1922 Schoenberg published a second edition of his 1911 textbook Harmonielehre. Klangfarbenmelodie is mentioned at the end of the chapter added in the second edition concerning chords with six or more tones.

...if it is possible to create patterns out of tone colours that are differentiated according to pitch patterns we call "melodies", progressions, whose coherence evokes an effect analogous to thought processes, then it must also be possible to make such progressions out of the tone colours of the other dimension, out of that which we call simply "tone colour"...

The chapter is concluded as follows:

...Tone colour melodies! How acute the senses that would be able to perceive them! How high the development of spirit that could find pleasure in such things!

In such a domain, who dares ask for theory!¹

The few other comments in these two pages are cut from the same bolt of cloth. The above excerpt gives an accurate impression of what one might glean from Schoenberg on the subject. He is enthusiastic but vague. However unclear the idea of tone colour melodies may be, in his 1951 book Style and Idea, Schoenberg makes clear that the idea was his alone:

...as far as Klangfarbenmelodie is concerned it is above all untrue that I invented this expression after hearing Webern's Klangfarben-compositions. Particularly, anyone can see that I had thought of progressions of tone-colours equalling harmonic progressions in terms of inner logic.²

In search of that inner logic, analysts have plumbed Schoenberg's Op. 16 for clues to the mysteries of tone colour melody. The third movement, titled "Farben" [colours], has drawn most of the attention. Insightful studies such as Charles Burkhardt's³ suggest that an application of the concept of tone colour melody is almost exclusively an emphasis on contrasts of timbre. At one point there is a set of colour chords that reappear in retrograde in bars 27-61, yet the clarity of this technique is obscured by other, less accessible features of timbre in the music. For example, while Op. 16 contains the aforementioned colour chords in retrograde, there seems to be no rationale for the short solos that appear in different instruments throughout the work. If the application of tone colour involves these chords but not the melody, why then did Schoenberg not use the term Klangfarbenakkorde [tone colour chords]? Erich Dolflein⁴ observes that Schoenberg applied names to the movements of Op. 16 after its completion, at the request of his publisher, and not as part of his original creative idea. Dolflein's convincing thesis is that we have no reason to believe that the master had any clear idea of what tone colour melody was meant to accomplish. Dahlhaus more or less agrees. "A corresponding 'logic' of Klangfarbenmelodie is indeed more complicated than the logic of pitch melody, inasmuch as the coincidence of overtones on which it is based is more involved."⁵ 'Logic', in quotations, sets a tone of scepticism. The exact nature of tone colour melody is unclear, apart from it being an abstract compositional afterthought of Schoenberg's.

Part 2 Webern's Op 6, no 1

Webern is recognized as a composer who was intensely concerned with musical colour, but the nature of his contributions has not been closely investigated except in general terms. He did in fact successfully incorporate colour into the structural configuration of his works. The treatment of colour in the miniatures is different from that in the aphorisms and is thus crucial to our investigation.

Tone colour became more clearly a structural element of Webern's music when his aphorisms shed the time-honoured practice of melodic development. Without repetitions and variations, the aphorism requires new alternatives to bring about a logical expressivity. Melody determines structure to a greater extent in the orchestral miniatures than in the orchestral aphorisms. In the orchestral aphorisms, a melodic moment's structural power is partially determined by the colour of the instrument that performs it.

The first movement of Op 6 works on the principle of three independent voices stated, developed and then restated, transformed yet recognizable. Timbre recognition plays a part in this process and Schoenberg's Op 16 is naturally a primary influence. Klangfarbenmelodie, for all the murkiness of its definition at this point, nevertheless becomes a factor.

Example 1 (Voice A) begins and ends the movement. Like the other two voices it fluently weaves in and out of duple and triple meter and elongates its durations over the course of the movement. However, unlike the other voices, Voice A moves in a wide register space of 13 or more in a consistently descending motion.

Example 1, Op. 6, no 1 (Voice A) bars 1-2

a

flute
trumpet

bars 8-10, b^b bass clarinet and bassoon,

b.

bars 8-13, cello, double-bass and solo cello,

c.

bars 15-19, trumpet,

d.

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The succeeding instrumental colours of the voice (flute/trumpet, bass clarinet/bassoon/cello, cello/bass, trumpet) do not create a sense of greater cohesion. The consistently descending contour renders this voice distinct

throughout the movement. These downward motions descend to certain notes repeatedly as a pseudo-tonal reference.

Like the Op. 5 pieces, these orchestral miniatures contain vestiges of tonality. The opening d^2 in the trumpet is heard again as d , temporary goal of a descending motion at the beginning of the second half of bar 8. In bars 8-10 the bass clarinet, bassoon and cello descend three times to the note F . Bar 12 includes two descents to A in the cellos and basses. In bars 8-12 Voice A descends to either F or A . The repetitions could be heard out of context as a D minor chord, or as a D followed by an F major sonority. But what is heard in context is only the recurrence of these notes at the bottom of a descending line. Because of the presence of other voices in the movement, which in no way corroborate the implied gravity of the notes D , F and A in Voice A, these notes with their vestiges of tonality add to the character of Voice A only. The effect is limited to the local recognition of tonal repetition in a single voice.

In contrast to Voice A's continual, wide-register descents, Voice B maintains a narrow band of registral movement and does not sweep from one register to another. However, it does split into two different directions. Voice B splits into two strains (variants of the same voice) at bar 7. Strain X and Strain Y. Strain X is the only voice to avoid a progressive lengthening of note values. Strain Y stretches its note values throughout the development, as do voices A and C.

Example 2, Op. 6, no 1 (Voice B) bars 1-3

a.

Horn in F

bars 4-6, harp,

b

bars 6-7, viola,

c

(Strain Y) bars 7-10, first violins,

d

strain Y continued, bars 11-13, second violins, violas,

e

(Strain X) bars 8-11, horns in F,

f

strain X continued, bars 12-13, clarinet,

g



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The inclusion of the opening horn call as the beginning of Voice B is justified registrally and in context of the overall tone colour structure. The opening horn note b reflects the central core of the tonal range of the harp in bars 4-6. In those eighteen notes b is played four times and aside from one f and one f#, the register does not reach beyond 4 semitones from that central b, extending naturally from the opening horn's prolonged b in bars 2-4.

The viola figure in bars 6-7 is the splintering off point where Strain Y separates from Strain X. Picking up exactly where the harp left off, Strain X maintains the b-oriented registral focus as well as the consistent 16ths. Strain Y is bound to Voice B by its lack of interval leaps and the use of *tremolo*, the speed and regularity of which relates itself to Voice B's 16th-note pattern.

Strain Y is distinct with its consistent first-species counterpoint style. The register is higher than that heard previously in Voice B. Strain Y is consistent in its use of register in keeping with the ethereal character of the voice. The lower half of Strain Y remains faithfully on d#1-e1, while the upper half hovers mostly around d2-d#2. The *tremolo* is comparable to Voice B's rhythmic pattern and Strain X's triplet 16ths.

Strain X maintains the register established earlier on b-c1. It differs from

the original Voice B material only in its switch to triplet rhythm and its inclusion of sixteenth-note rests. Both strains are united in the harp's closing gesture in bar 14. In this ascending thirty-second-note *glissando*, the speed of the notes carries on the acceleration implicit in the *tremolo* of Strain Y as well as the switch from duple to triple sixteenth-notes in Strain X. Harp is a timbre that occurred before the split of Voice B into separate strains. The harp gesture is connected to the rest of Voice B by rapidity of notes and tone colour.

This harp gesture, coupled with the trumpet's descending gesture, ultimately binds both voices A and B together while revisiting the opening of the piece. Having done so, the ending sounds like an imitation of the opening in a new context. However, having heard the unfolding of each voice separately, one now may perceive the closer relation of two voices both in motive and colour.

Example 3, Op. 6, no 1, bars 14-19

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The trumpet (Voice A), having underpinned the ascending/descending opening motions of the flute in bars 1-2, now returns to perform two descending gestures, each of which is completed by the harp. The harp (Voice B) precedes the descending gestures with its own ascent, recreating the up/down motion of bars 1-

2. Webern interconnects the two voices, producing a rehearing of the opening's general contours laden with new power and sensitivity

Voice C works on the simple premise of chords in motion. Beginning with the opening material, there is a four-part chorale-like texture that closes as a static four-note chord. The ending of the voice is a reference to the beginning. The colours are clearly part of the referential process.

Example 4a, Op. 6, no. 1

bars 1-3
beginning of Voice C
celeste, viola and
cello

bars 15-17
ending of Voice C
celeste, viola and
cello

Such an obvious restatement speaks for itself. The point is that this voice, while not connected to any other, has a completely coherent beginning, middle and end. While a definitive syntactic analysis has yet to be offered, no music in this movement can be regarded as inexplicable. In the central part of Voice C Webern puts the chords into motion, as seen in Example 4b.

Example 4b, Op. 6, no 1, bars 4-9

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Voice C's central part, a polyphonic ostinato, accompanies the other voices and emphasizes the dramatic curve. At the opening, the chorale-like Voice C is heard in the celesta and middle strings. The three-chord gesture of the strings spells out the contrary motion to be carried out in this voice. In bars 4-6 the clarinet, trumpet and solo cello perform contrapuntal melodies in duple time with triplets interspersed among the players to disrupt the direct metric pulse. The rhythmic values themselves are consistently quarters and eighths.

In bars 8-10 several colour changes take place to heighten the intensity of

the work. In bar 7 the clarinet and trumpet drop out and the oboe and flute begin. However, rather than counterpoint, these new colours perform a melody in unison. This unison material moves in triplets, suggesting an impending metric pulse which is never realized.

The heightening of tension comes from a crystallization of the individual voices, which amplifies the presence of each. In bars 8-10 each voice climaxes in a way that is dissonant to the language established in the movement. In such a chromatic language, the doubling of tones generates tension and every voice (except Voice B's Strain Y) does so at the climax. Another means of raising intensity is registral displacement. The doubled Voice C is heard around c^2 , an octave above its register in bars 4-7. In Voice A this registral displacement is enacted with wider intervals of descent in the area of highest tension, the widest being $f\#1-A$ in the cellos and basses in bar 10, a leap of 21. Voice B breaks off into different strains in the same section. Each voice stresses its own individual quality until it is maximally expressive.

This miniature movement, like Op. 5 #2, is sectional in its construction. In bars 1-3 an opening germ of three separate ideas is sounded. Bars 4-13 involve the development of the voices, stressing the individual quality of each voice to its utmost. This happens at approximately the same time in each voice, creating a climax and enforcing the greater dramatic curve of the movement. The remaining bars 14-19 accommodate what has happened throughout the movement by recapitulating in a new way the materials which have been apparently exhausted in the bars 4-13, reflecting Schoenberg's remark "Don't write a strict recapitulation, a copyist could do that!"⁶ Berg's suggestion to his

students also comes to mind "Think of what the music has lived through during its adolescence." 7

Not only is a sectional construction to be found in time (horizontally), it is also found vertically. That is, the three individual voices are separate yet also work concurrently to constitute a kind of vertical sectional construction. This sectional construction identifies the movement as a miniature, as do the consistently recognisable lines throughout the movement. As was mentioned, repetition and vestiges of tonality are also present in Op 6, no 1. These are all qualities not to be found in the aphorism.

Tone colour takes part in clarifying the form, though not in any revolutionary manner. In Voice A the trumpet occurs at the beginning and end. Voice C is bracketed by a combination of middle strings and celeste, with cello consistently sounding throughout. The matter is slightly more involved in Voice B, as is shown in Example 5.

Example 5, Op 6, no 1, overview of voices and instrumental colours

Voice A

Bars 1-2	Bars 8-10	Bars 10-14	Bars 15-18
flute	bass clarinet	cello section	
-	bassoon	cello solo	- trumpet
trumpet	cello section	bass	

Voice B

Bars 2-7	Bars 7-13	Bars 14-19
horn - harp - viola	Strain Y violin, viola	- harp
	Strain X horn, clarinet	

Voice C

Bars 1-3	Bars 4-7	Bars 8-10	Bars 15-17
celeste	clarinet	flute	celeste
viola	trumpet	oboe	viola
cello	solo cello	solo cello	cello

In Voice B the opening colours are represented in all subsequent parts. The horn (bars 2-4) reappears in Strain X in bars 8-11. The harp does the same in bars 4-6 and in the ending of the voice, bar 14. The viola, which creates the splintering effect in bars 5-6, ends Strain Y in bar 13. But none of this could be considered a radical treatment of timbre. James Baker is correct in focusing on motivic development rather than colour in Op. 6 because the voices are what cause the music to cohere.⁸ In Op. 10, on the other hand, colour became an essential key to the music's dramatic structure. This most likely came about because the many rhetorical devices left unused in Webern's aphorisms created a vacuum which demanded to be filled by new methods.

As already mentioned, Webern's Op. 6 arose directly from the Op. 16 of his teacher, mentor and colleague Arnold Schoenberg. Schoenberg's Six Small Piano Pieces, Op. 19 were vital for their formal influence on Webern's aphorisms. After Schoenberg's experiment in aphoristic form he never returned to this musical style. He never attempted to orchestrate an aphorism. As Oliver Neighbour put it, "he left this train of thought for Webern."⁹

Part 3 Webern's Op 10, no 1

Tone colour melody is more inventively utilized in the structure of the aphorism (Op 10) than in the miniature (Op 6). Webern's second set of orchestral pieces does not differ significantly from his Op 9, except in the broader spectrum of timbre. This is demonstrated in the following examples.

Example 6, Op 10, no 1, bars 1-2

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The movement begins with the unison B-C-B tone colour chords in the first two bars. Each chord is different: b¹=trumpet and harp, c²=celesta, harp and viola, and the second b¹=flutter-tongue flute and harp. The second unison B is notated in triplet rhythm so that it rhythmically blends into the descending triplet line of the glockenspiel in bar 3. The line is eb²-g¹-d¹, its intervals equalling 1, 4 and 5. Restatements of the opening colours and/or intervals affirm the context of the above example while new colours and/or intervals create tension.

Example 7

Op. 10, no. 1
bars 3-6

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The semi-tonal $g\#1-a^1$ trill in the celeste is consistent with the opening both in colour and interval. Both the colour and the interval have been heard already and thus contextualize the following music. The trill keeps the opening fresh in the mind of the listener. This is essential to the shape and the effectiveness of the movement.

The clarinet is the most obvious dissonance. There is no member of the reed family anywhere else in the movement, hence the clarinet sounds as a timbral anomaly, creating tension. Another source of tension created by the clarinet is the absence of semitones in its melody. With the semitone trill underpinning the other instruments, any melody without the interval 1 sounds intervallically dissonant.

The harp doubles the strings in bars 4-6 as it did with other instruments in the beginning. The intervals of these doubled notes ($b-d^{1}/c^1-e^{b1}/b^b-d^b$) involve both consonant and dissonant properties. On the one hand, they chromatically circumscribe the first note $b-c-b^b$ and $d-e^b-d^b$. This is audibly in chromatic compliance with the underlying trill and the opening material. However, the interval that is consistently maintained as a vertical dyad is 3 (9), which is new to the soundscape. This dyad is accentuated horizontally in the flute in bars 4-5, the flute descends ($c^{\#2}-b^{b1}$) to add an additional horizontal 3. Together the five instruments create an internally coherent colour scheme.

Example 8a, Op 10, no. 1 overview of instrumental colours

Bar 4	Bar 5		Bar 6
Flute	Flute	Flute	
Harp		Harp	Harp
Strings	Strings	Strings	Strings

The arrangement seems to develop the opening idea.

Example 8b

Bar 0	Bar 1	
Harp	Harp	Harp
Trumpet	Celeste	Flute
	Viola	

This contrasting and complementary material generates a richer organic form. Just as the initial doublings involved the most direct of chromatic connections (0-1-0), the doubled chords circle the initial chromatic and are thus more involved (1-2-0). That is to say, the viola's $d^1-e^{b1}-d^{b1}$ (1-2-0) in bars 4-6 is a chromatic extension of the harp's $b^1-c^2-b^1$ (0-1-0) in bars 0-1. The same applies to the tone colour chords, as seen in Example 8.

The clarinet's character as an individual line sounds like an outgrowth of

the glockenspiel's free descending line in bar 2. The contour of the clarinet's line (ascending and descending) as well as its colour, lack of chromatics and extended length are new to the movement. Disregarding these tensional contrasts, the following bars embrace the differing qualities of the clarinet's line to push the more familiar colours into longer, more individual lines.

Rather than the clarinet's differing qualities setting up a conflict to be overcome or assimilated, this contrast seems rather to instigate an explosion of polyphony. The clarinet's colour draws the listener into its extended melodic line while its lack of chromatics offers a distinct character that is not overwhelmed by the chordal motions of the many other instruments. Consequently, in Example 9, the melodies thrive while the chordal motions are reduced to the tiny contrary motion moment between the trumpet and trombone in bars 6-7.

Example 9

Op. 10, no 1
bars 6-9

Handwritten musical score for Example 9, Op. 10, no 1, bars 6-9. The score is written on five staves. The top staff is for Violin (8ve), the second for Viola (Vlc.), the third for Trumpet (Trp.) and Flute (Fl.), the fourth for Trombone (Tib.), and the fifth for Cello (Cel) and Contrabass (cont.). The music is in 3/4 time and features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

The final bars bring a return to the simpler qualities and familiar colours of the beginning. The harp, consistently adhering to its initial single-line texture, plays the final, unaccompanied melodic line. In the opening the glockenspiel had performed a solo descending line, but the harp performs a lengthier arabesque in bars 10-11 (see Example 10). Surrounding the harp are unisons, both of the same and differing octaves as heard in the beginning: g^3 in the glockenspiel-violin and $g^{\#1}$ in the cello and celeste. The concluding fl's act to signal stillness through their sheer lack of musical motion. This technique of recalling the opening material in a static way was also used in Op. 6, as seen in Example 4a.

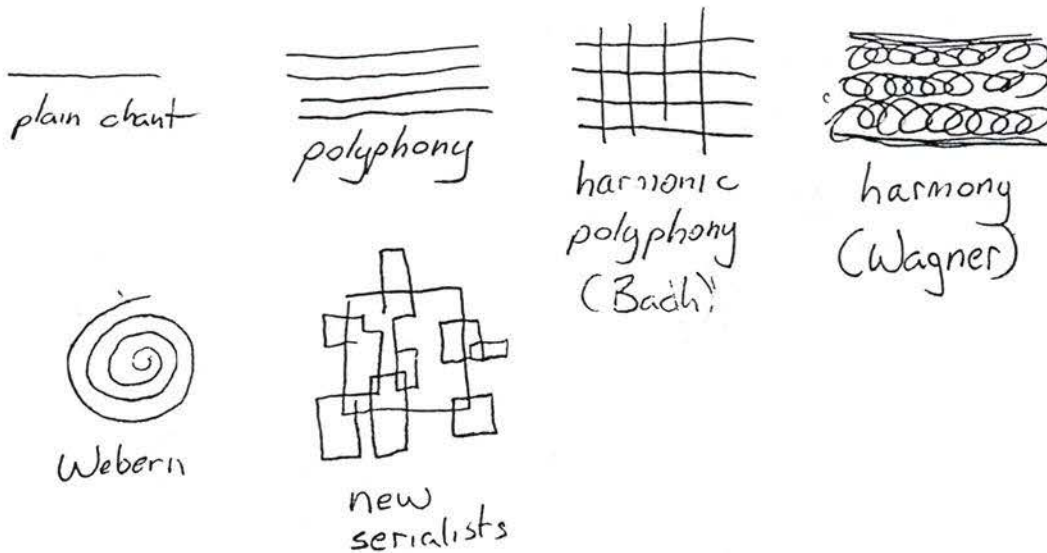
Although the orchestral miniatures and aphorisms do not differ sharply from their string quartet siblings, the use of colour in the first movement of Op. 10 is quite exceptional. The movement exploits the distinctiveness of the isolated reed timbre. Therefore, the music is employing tone colour (and in this case melody) as a structural element.

Notes

- 1 Arnold Schoenberg, Theory of Harmony, trans Robert Adams (London. Faber & Faber, 1922), p 422
- 2 Arnold Schoenberg, Style and Idea, trans Leo Black (New York, St Martin Press, 1975), p 484
- 3 Charles Burkhart, "Schoenberg's Farben An Analysis of Op 16, No 3," Perspectives Of New Music 12, (Fall-Winter 1973), 141-72
- 4 Erich Dolfein, "Schoenberg's Opus 16 Nr 3 Der Mythos der Klangfarbenmelodie," Melos, (Berlin), no 36 (May 1969), 203-5
- 5 Carl Dahlhaus, Schoenberg and the New Music, trans Derrick Puffett (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1984), 143
- 6 Theodor Adorno, Alban Berg, trans Juliane Brand and Christopher Hailey (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1991), p 48
- 7 *Ibid*, p 103
- 8 "In spite of Webern's assertion that his Six Pieces are devoid of thematic connections, certain events do occur sporadically throughout the set which seem to be involved in traditional motivic correspondences " James M. Baker, "Coherence in Webern's Six Pieces for Orchestra, Op 6," Music Theory Spectrum 16 (1994), 3
- 9 Oliver Neighbour, The New Grove Second Viennese School (New York, W W Norton and Co , 1983), p 41

Chapter Three Music for String Instrument and Piano

Part One Webern's Op. 7, no. 4



-doodle by Stravinsky¹

Among the miniatures, Op. 7 is perhaps closest to the aphorisms for its total integration and appearance of through-composition. However, it is still a set of miniatures, including repetition, tonal remnants, and a sectional, contrasting writing style that disappears in opp. 9, 10 and 11.

Henri-Louis Matter rightly suggested that Op. 7 was "action music"². In the final movement, Webern's use of register imparts each gesture with a unique identity. Reinhard Schultz discovered "... in the Four Pieces Op. 7, a central tone, a sounded centre which is returned to again and again"³.

This discovery was followed by Felix Meyer and Anne Shreffler's revealing article which brings to light, with airtight deduction, that Webern revised Op. 7 to emphasize its internal allusions to a central tone⁴. This analytical direction is the most convincing to date and strengthens the argument that Op. 7 is a collection of miniatures, akin to Opp. 5 and 6, and distinct from the aphorisms⁵.

Example 1, Op 7, no 4, bars 1-5

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At the opening of Webern's Op 7, no 4 the violin melody is supported by piano accompaniment that is entirely inclusive intervallically. Since every interval is found in the accompaniment, no interval in the solo instrument can be heard as unequivocally dissonant. However, the accompaniment provides symmetries for the melody to complement, with a sense of filling out the opening gesture and a need for the gesture to lead to another in search of repose.

Symmetry is found in the attack points. Very simply, the violin is staggered one bar before the piano and both violin and piano separately form an ABA attack point structure. In the violin, the first and third bars include duple-time motion while the second bar contains no attack point but rather a sustained e^3 . In the piano the outer bars (bars 2 and 4) are in duple rhythm whilst the middle bar (bar 3) is in triplet rhythm. In both the violin and piano the return of duple time cuts the number of attack points

per bar in half. That is, the violin sixteenths in bar 1 are replaced by eighths in bar 3. The piano has quarter notes in bar 4, as opposed to staggered eighths in bar 2. In bar 4 the piano performs straight, unstaggered quarter notes, halving the amount of attack points.

This symmetry is furthered by register. Both instruments ascend and descend in a manner that confirms equal proportions, again staggered by one bar. In bar 1 the violin ascends to e^3 , which is sustained through the following bar and descends in bar 3. The piano does the same in the bass, moving from A^1 to d in bar 2, holding the d for a solid bar and then dropping to G^1 in bar 4.

These symmetries conceal a deeper harmonic allusion to tonal triads, buried deep within a chromatic field. The harmonic allusion begins in the first beat of bar 2, with notes (in ascending order) A^1 - $c^{\#2}$ - eb^2 and e^3 in the violin. The A major triad becomes audible within the atonal field. The following piano chords in bars 3-4 alternate between d - b - eb^1 - ab^1 - $c^{\#2}$ - eb^2 and d - c^1 - f^1 - ab^1 - b^1 - eb^2 . The first chord includes the $c^{\#}$, the only note belonging to the A major triad, and doubles the eb , which adds further weight to the chord (not the triad). The second chord has neither the weight of a reference to the A triad nor that of a doubled note. Additionally, the second chord contains F - A^b ($G^{\#}$)- B and D , the notes of a diminished seventh of A and thus implies a dominant function with respect to A. Therefore, when the section concludes in bar 5 *con fermata* with the second chord the effect is that of ending on a comparatively unstable harmony. The opening five bars sound as a complete gesture yet seem incomplete, as if leading somewhere. The listener has yet to feel what Christopher Lewis refers to as a “dimly apprehended totality”⁶

This feeling of A-ness is furthered in the following bars. Concealed throughout the music are restatements of the A major triad.

Example 2, Op. 7, no. 4, bars 7-9

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This music is not tonal, yet the underlying sound of tonality is clearly important to Webern. It sounds as if Webern is playing the triad's power by surrounding it with chromatic complements, like a beast of prey hiding in the foliage.

Example 2a, bars 7-9

	Bar 7	Bar 8	Bar 9
beat 1	b 3	b 2 (violin) b 2 5	b 2
	e ²	e ³ -a ² -----c ³	c ³
	c ^{#2}	a ²	a ²
	a ¹	e ²	e ²

The final chord of bar 7 does not affirm the triad (except for the a¹) but the accompaniment is not strictly alternating chords--as it was in the first example--and so the previous effect of stable/unstable or tonic/dominant is diffused. The A triad is not ready to pounce, although the piano's right

hand ascends in a manner that would have us expect otherwise.

A symmetrical sense of direction appears again between the violin and piano. Throughout bars 5-7 the violin descends g^3-b as the upper line of the piano ascends $b^2-f\#^3$. In terms of register this is a clear contrast to the previous example, which ran in parallel motion. Example 2 moves in contrary motion.

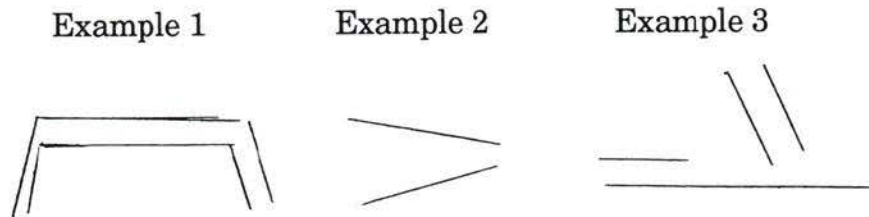
In the next and final example the movement culminates not climactically but to quiet release. The tonal sounds of A major and other incidental triads do not amount to anything other than sounds void of real tonal force. The affect is in contrast to the previous example, which, with the ascending left hand in the piano, suggested it was leading to a more explosive continuation.

Example 3, Op. 7, no 4, bars 10-15

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The A major triad makes itself felt once more in an audible yet

unobtrusive manner: $c\#^3$ (violin, bars 10-12), a^2 (piano, bar 12), $c\#^1$ (piano, bar 13). The violin, in its two identical descents in bars 13-15, does not include any notes of the triad. Concurrent with this breakdown of pseudo-tonal co-operation, the violin performs in a register that ceases to interact

with the register of the piano as it did in Example 1 and Example 2.⁷ The register of each example may be schematized as follows, somewhat in the spirit of Stravinsky's doodles at the beginning of this chapter:



The “dimly apprehended totality” is now indisputable. Webern has chosen to end this movement with a repeated, descending cadential line. He employed the same strategy to conclude another miniature movement, namely Op. 6, no. 1 (see Chapter 2). Such a technique would not be viable in an aphorism because that form precludes the use of repetitions. Op. 7 involves musical devices that are common to all Webernian miniatures: melodic phrases in one distinct instrument, repetition (in both melody and accompaniment), distinct sections, remnants of tonality and effective contrasts. In his ensuing music Webern dispenses with all these resources in favour of a completely unique, rhetoric-free language. Among the aphorisms, he was perhaps most successful of all with his Op. 11. Webern never again produced music as challenging for the listener as this work for cello and piano.

Part 2 Webern's Op. 11, no 3

The intensification of expression was found in conjunction with a taboo against the extension of time. Inseparable were the necessity to overcome time from the disinclination to use extension and development to compromise the purity of the expressively charged moment.

-Adorno on Webern⁸

This work has not generated a great deal of scholarship, but a few writers have addressed it. Perle discussed Webern's Op. 11 in passing in Serial Composition and Atonality, describing the work as a "juxtaposition of minimal elements" and "not athematic but all-thematic"⁹. Batstone suggested that a subliminal counterpoint might be the key to these cello pieces¹⁰. Samson mentions the "connection between pitches."¹¹ No analyst has done this work justice; and indeed, an effort to do so may still prove premature. Op. 11 can be demonstrated to be distinctly a collection of aphorisms rather than miniatures. This work perfectly demonstrates how an aphorism relies upon completely new musical methods to create a coherence that is referred to here as the super-charged gesture.

Example 4, Op. 11, no 3, bars 1-3

mit Dämpfer
am Steg,

1 2 3

ppp — sf — ppp

ppp

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The tiny fragment shown in Example 4 constitutes an entire third of

the movement. From beginning to end, the piece must be heard as a single,

non-contrasted gesture or the meaning is lost. The intervals themselves are the key. The melody begins with E^b-F^b , a semi-tonal trill that leads to c^1 . Thus the intervals include a semitonal trill (1), followed by F^b-c^1 (4).

In bar 2 the opening piano harmony ($F^1-C^\sharp-d$) contains the intervals 1, 3, 4 and is thus consonant with the opening melody. The following B in the cello, from c^1 , forms the consonant interval 1. In bar 3 the cello plays B^b , a note a semitone away from B, which again seems consonant with the chord. However, the implications of the cello's direction are deeper than the initial relative consonance of the melody.

There exists a pseudo-appoggiatura between the lowest note (F^1) and the melody, which (beginning in bar 2) moves from c^1 to B (1) to B^b (1). When the whole movement is heard the interval 6 (F^1-B) sounds dissonant and the interval 5 (F^1-B^b) sounds consonant, which creates the appoggiatura-like quality heard when the cello continues from B to B^b over the piano's F.

Example 5, Op. 11, no 3, bars 4-6

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Example 5 begins melodically ($f^\sharp-G^\sharp-g$) and leads to an $E^1-eb-g-f^1$

harmony, conspicuously lacking the intervals 5 and 6. Only intervals 1, 2, 3 and 4 are present. The ear awaits a clear interval to grasp as identifiable

and as therefore salient. The only 5 heard so far was obscured by chromatics. There is something mysterious in the music, thinly textured as it is, as it seemingly struggles to produce a single clear interval. This is atonality as pure as one could ever hope to hear. Not only is Op. 11 totally lacking in tonal reference, but it also blurs the intervals chromatically. Close listening reveals that it is the temporary absence of one interval, the 5, that enhances its expressivity.

Example 6, Op. 11, no. 3, bars 7-10

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The conclusion highlights the prodigal interval. The piano features F#-B interval 5. The interval is blurred by C and B^{b1}, but is more audible than before--registrally contiguous rather than embedded within a chord. In the final bars the cello performs another clear 5, from a¹ to d². It would be impossible to appreciate this ending without remembering the conflicts of the opening. The conclusion affirms the opening so that only when the interval 5 is stated clearly can the listener understand the musical argument.

Op. 11, no. 3 was the last atonal instrumental work that Webern published. Tracing the development of Webern's music from 1909 to 1914, we see a retreat from thematic development to progressively more atomized melodic ideas. The culmination of such a compositional

development was the ennobling of a single interval in the super-charged gesture. Thereafter Webern retreated to the world of song with its own demands of text setting. Perhaps this occurred because the aphorism was itself disappearing, becoming ever smaller, leading to silence.

But the progressive atomization of Webern's music involved plateaus. Miniatures became aphorisms and when the super-charged gesture became too small, only lyrics could provide Webern with a vehicle that would keep his music within time and sound. Words kept Webern composing for ten years until the 12-tone method made instrumental composition possible again in 1924.

The miniature had greatly reduced the scale of romantic music. However, it still maintained many of the basic rhetorical conventions associated not only with romanticism but with all Western music written since the eighteenth century, such as contrasts, sectional construction, repetition and accompanied homophonic textures. The succeeding pieces then annulled musical narrativity almost completely in favour of a musical aphorismos--a bare, concise definition.¹² They did so by eliminating all those conventions the miniature had retained in favour of a rigorous spinning-out of the implications of the opening material. With very few exceptions, Webern's musical aphorisms did not reconcile differing musical elements or formal sections but they succinctly exploited with unparalleled concentration those tonal relations heard in the opening moments of music. During the following years, the situation could not sustain itself, it was not the right time for musical narrative to evaporate. However, Webern's musical aphorisms remain a unique and cherished part of the artistic legacy of Vienna's fin-de-siècle.

Notes

- 1 Richard B Manchester, The Pencil Pastimes Book of Fun and Games (New York Bristol Park Books, 1994), 145
- 2 Henri-Louis Matter, Webern (Lausanne, Switzerland, L'age d'homme, 1981), 41
- 3 “ in den vier Stücken op 7, ein Zentralton, ein klangisches Zentrum, zu dem immer wieder zurückgekehrt wird ” Reinhard Schulz, Über das Verhältnis von Konstruktion und Ausdruck in den Musik Anton Weberns (Munich, Wilhelm Fink, 1982), 47
- 4 Felix Meyer and Anne Shreffler, “Performance and Revision Webern’s Four Pieces, Op 7,” Webern Studies, ed Katherine Bailey (New York Cambridge University Press, 1996), 135-69 (esp 150-58)
- 5 In the above article, the Op 7 is referred to as “among the first of Webern’s aphorisms” (p 135) This does not pose a scholastic conflict because the scope and point of the above article and this thesis is quite different
- 6 Christopher Lewis, “The Mind’s Chronology Narrative Times and Harmonic Disruption in Postromantic Music,” The Second Practice of Nineteenth-Century Tonality, ed William Kinderman and Harald Krebs (Lincoln University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 142
- 7 In a letter to Stein, Webern wrote that he was more concerned that the sound of these final descents of the violin were *wie ein Hauch* (like a breath) Webern Studies, 135
- 8 “Die Intensivierung des Ausdrucks fand sich zusammen mit einem Tabu gegen die Extension in der Zeit Untrennbar war die Not, Zeit zu bewältigen, von der Scheu, durch zeitliche Ausdehnung und Entfaltung, die Reinheit des ausdrucks geladenen Augenblicks einzubüssen ” Theodor Adorno, Klangfiguren. Musikalische Schriften 1 (Frankfurt Suhrkamp Verlag, 1959), 161
- 9 George Perle, Serial Composition and Atonality (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1981), 21-23
- 10 Philip Batstone, “Musical Analysis as Phenomenology”, Perspectives of New Music 7 (Spring-Summer 1969), 94-110.
- 11 Jim Samson, Music in Transition. A Study of Tonal Expansion and Atonality 1900-1920 (London Dent, 1977), 186
- 12 Traces of recurrence do appear occasionally in the aphorisms. One example would be the hint of ternary form found in Webern’s first bagatelle

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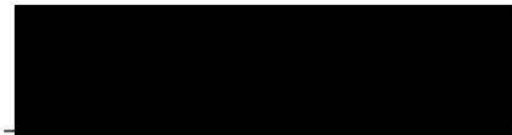
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