Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Charles Ives

Mischa Elman

SEXUAL—AND STYLISTIC—POLITICS

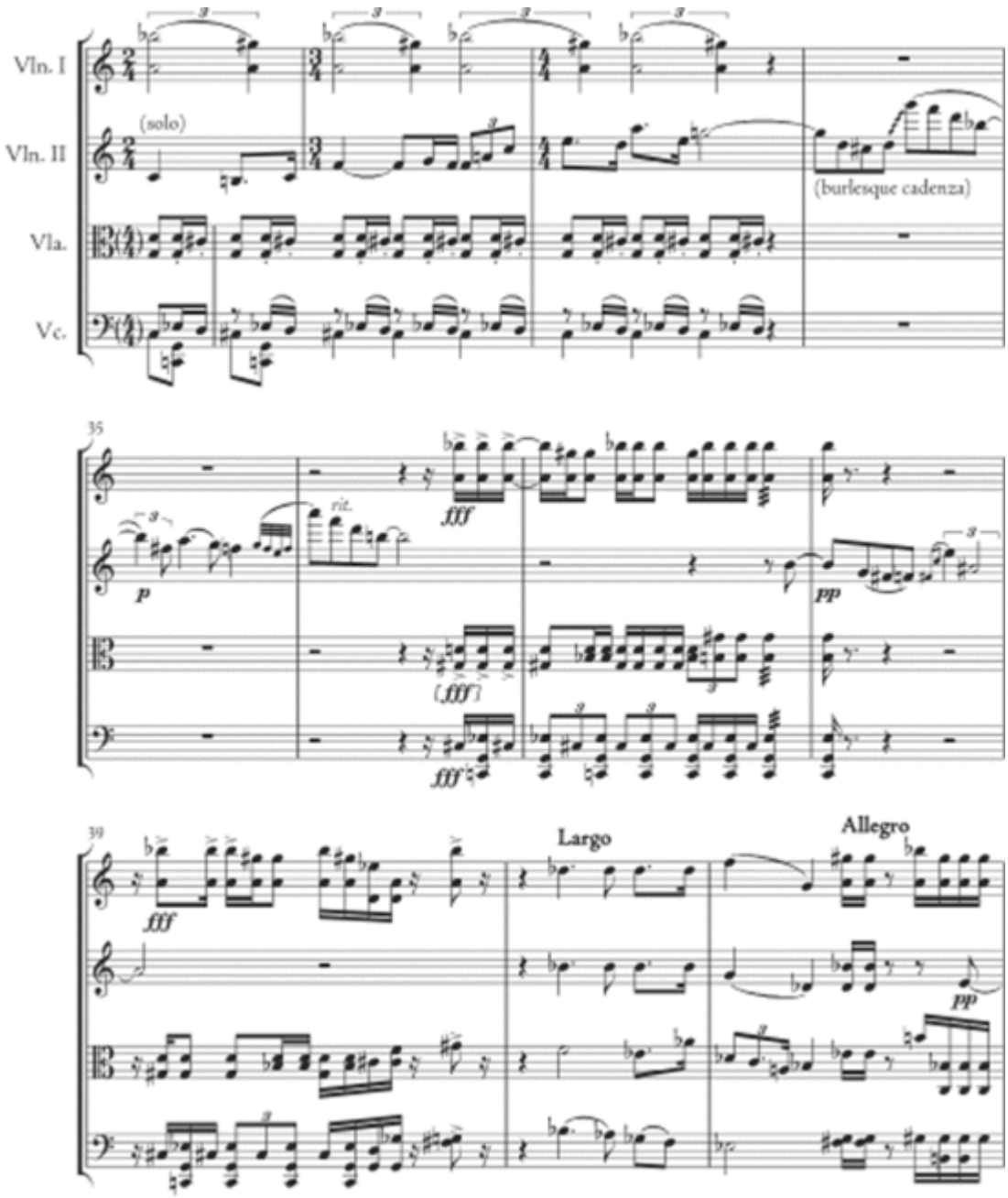
Chapter: CHAPTER 5 Containing Multitudes (Transcendentalism, II)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

But did he stop being an artist? His business career gave Ives the courage to write music (and write it in quantity) of a kind that fully expressed his idealistic commitments. Yet here, too, a certain amount of gender role-playing seems to have been a factor. His fear of the effeminacy associated in America with classical music fed his maximalistic inclinations, since to his mind a conspicuously "strong" and dissonant style was an assertion of masculinity. The abundant Ives apocrypha is full of stories attesting to this sort of blustery machismo, including one in which he rebuked a protesting member of the audience at a modern music concert by shouting, "Stop being such a goddamn sissy! Why can't you stand up before fine strong music like this and use your ears like a man?"[13] The *Memos*, too, abound in raillery against "old ladies of both sexes" who patronized "nice" music.[14] (Here, as Rossiter points out, Ives the wealthy but conflicted businessman was rebelling against his own social class.) And as the *Memos* reveal, at least one of Ives's most stylistically radical scores—the Second String Quartet, composed, like most of the music that followed Ives's professional withdrawal, over a lengthy span of years (1907-13)—originated in protest against the feminine connotations of its genre. After attending recitals by the Boston-based Kneisel Quartet, one of the most prestigious chamber groups then playing in America, Ives recalled,

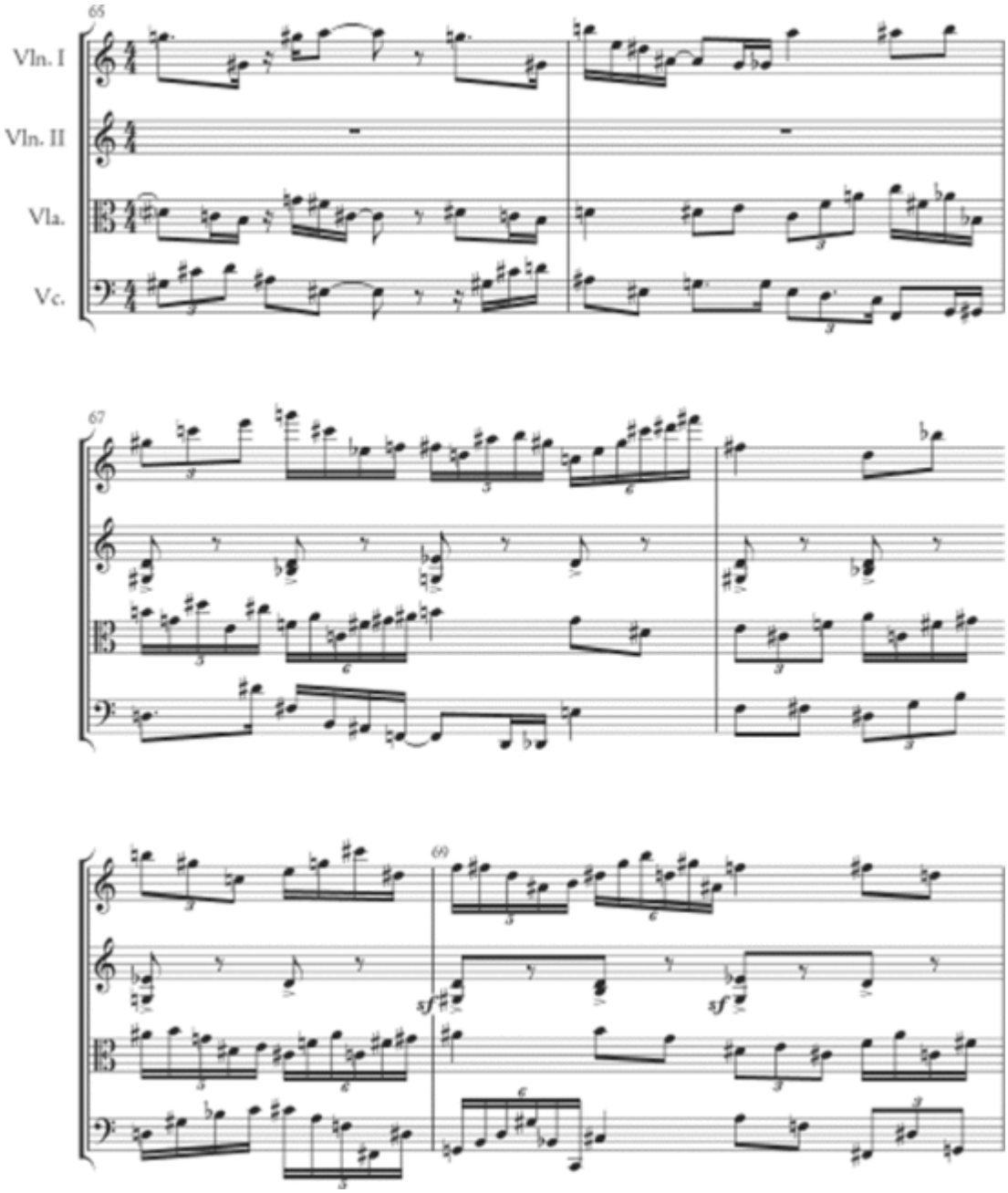
> It used to come over me...that music had been, and still was, too much of an emasculated art. Too much of what was easy and usual to play and to hear was called beautiful, etc.—the same old even-vibration, Sybaritic apron-strings, keeping music too much tied to the old ladies. The string quartet music got more and more weak, trite, and effeminate. After one of those Kneisel Quartet concerts in the old Mendelssohn Hall, I started a string quartet score, half mad, half in fun, and half to try out, practise, and have some fun with making those men fiddlers get up and do something like men.[15]

The quartet's three movements, according to the *Memos*, were originally called "I. Four Men have Discussions, Conversations, II. Arguments and Fight, III. Contemplation." (In the published score the titles were replaced by a general note: "String Quartet for four men who converse, discuss, argue (in re 'politics'), fight, shake hands, shut up, then walk up the mountainside to view the firmament.") The second movement, actually the first to be composed (1907–11), is the one that most concretely embodies the attitudes and anxieties expressed in the *Memos*. The implied scenario that it enacts is probably clear enough from the sounds of the music, but it is vividly spelled out in some oft-quoted marginalia found in Ives's manuscript score.

The second violin is cast there as one "Rollo Finck." The first name is that of the hero in a series of boys' books Ives knew from his childhood, a paragon of good behavior. The surname is that of Henry Theophilus Finck (1854–1926), the influential music critic of the New York *Evening Post*. Rollo is thus the epitome of the good little "feminized" musician against whose smug, limited values Ives spent his years of creative seclusion protesting. In no other work is the programmatic import of his maximalized idiom so explicitly set forth.



ex. 5-5a Charles Ives, String Quartet no. 2, II, mm. 31-42



ex. 5-5b Charles Ives, String Quartet no. 2, II, mm. 65-69

Rollo starts out by interrupting the proceedings with some sentimental cadenzas (Ex. 5-5a). The first two are marked “Andante emasculata”; the third time, marked “Largo sweetota,” he briefly gets the rest of the quartet to join him before being swatted down as before (in one case with the marking “Allegro con fisto”). The first little cadenza carries the additional notation, “alla rubato ELMAN (pretty tone, ladies),” in sarcastic allusion to the Russian-born violin prodigy Mischa Elman (1891–1967), who had just made his sensational New York debut at the time when Ives was composing the quartet, and whose “most glorious attribute” (according to *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*) was “his rich, sensuous and infinitely expressive tone, which became legendary.”[16] Ives had little use for it. “My God,” he once exclaimed in print, “what has sound got to do with music!”[17] At various points Rollo simply drops out of the doings. “Tut, tut,” Ives notes in the margin, and “Too hard to play—so it just *can't* be good music, Rollo.” On returning after one such absence, Rollo plays doggedly on the beat while the rest of the quartet is enjoying a riot of hemiolas and syncopations (Ex. 5-5b). “Beat time, Rollo!” reads the marginal note. Over one last florid but not too difficult passage for the second violin Ives writes “Join in again, Professor, all in the key of C. You can do that nice

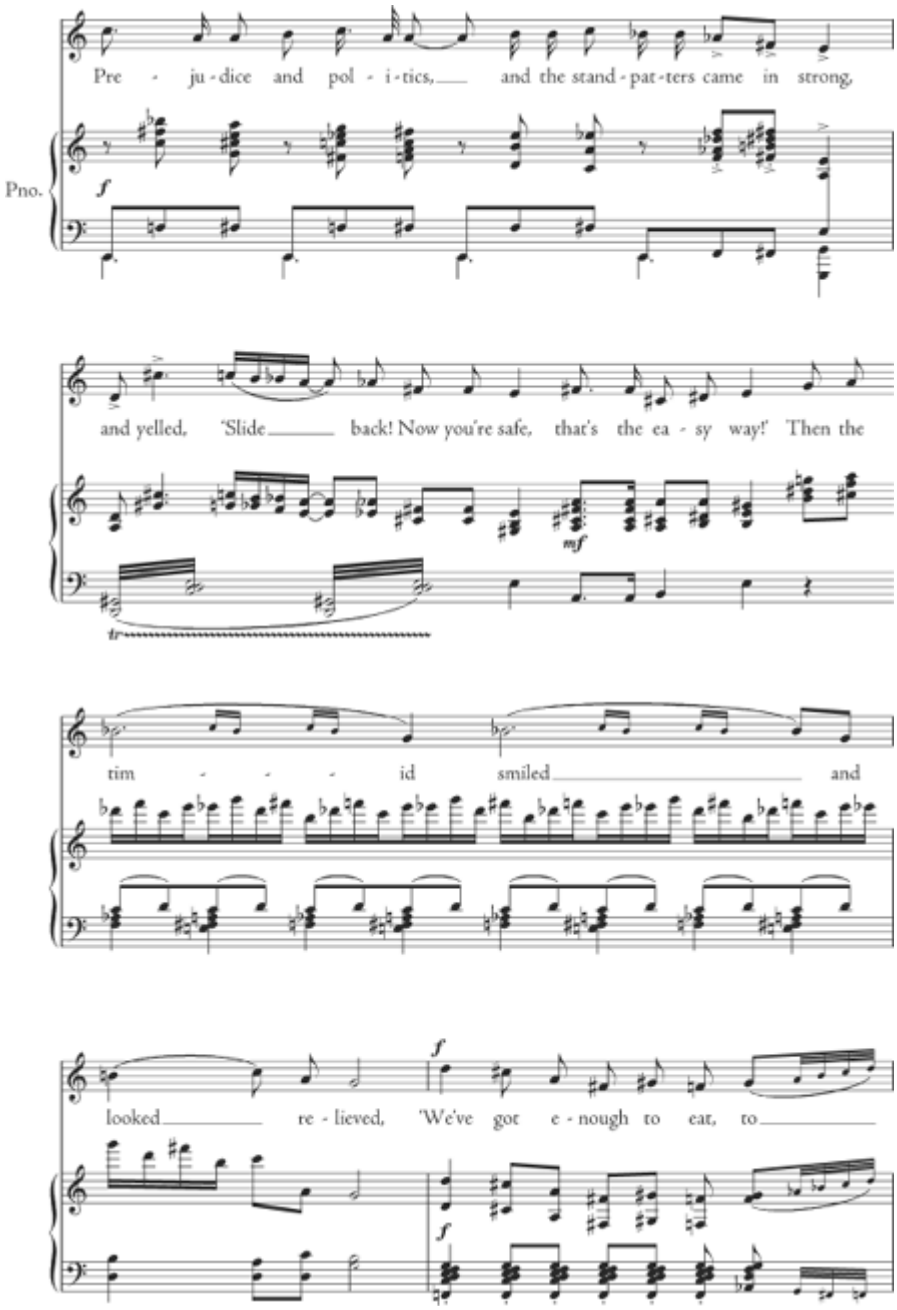
and pretty." Motivated so obviously by anxiety and resentment, the humor here has not worn well. In an age when social equality is taken more seriously (and more literally) than it was in Ives's day, when misogyny and homophobia have become openly identified and debated social issues, and when the sexual politics informing, say, Strauss's *Salome* or Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* are no longer thought irrelevant to their critical evaluation, the masculinist aspect of Ives's maximalism has come in for some reproach. While few have been inclined to go as far as Lawrence Kramer, Ives's severest critic, who reads the second movement of the Second Quartet quite simply as "gay-bashing,"[18] the value of his stylistic adventures, in light of what is now often regarded as their questionable social motivation, is no longer taken quite so readily for granted as it once was.

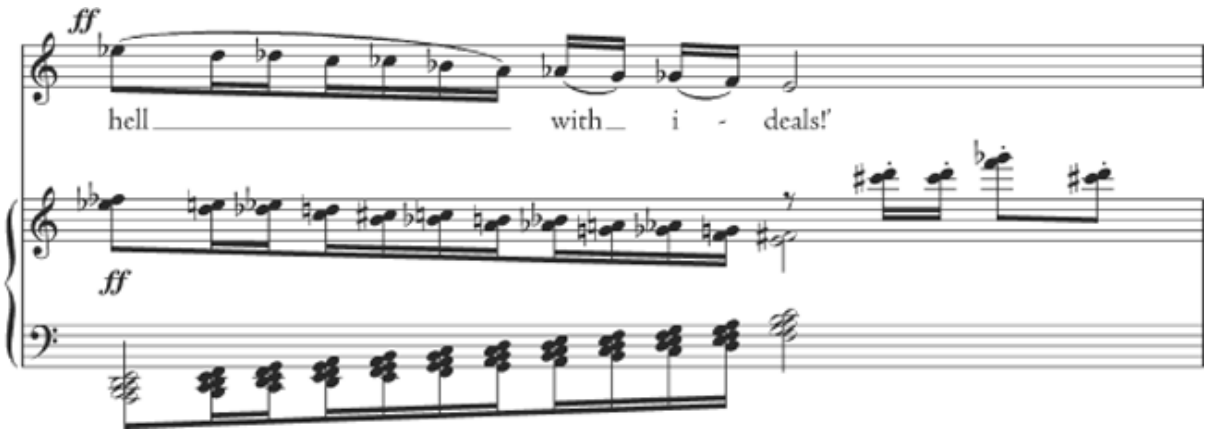
fig. 5-4 Mischa Elman.

And yet their motivation was no single thing, and the stylistic dichotomy between the "strongly" dissonant (replete with "polytonal" chords and even "clusters" of semitones) and the "nice" can be read, like all dichotomies, in various ways depending on the context. In "Nov. 2, 1920" (sometimes called "An Election"), a song to a meditative prose text by the composer expressing his disgust at the repudiation of Woodrow

Wilson's visionary internationalist policies in the presidential election of 1920, in favor of small-minded "normalcy" (as the successful Republican candidate, Warren G. Harding, famously called it[19]), the stylistic dichotomy symbolizes the "difficult" politics of idealism vs. the "easy" politics of expediency (Ex. 5-6; note in particular the setting of the words "Now you're safe, that's the easy way!").

Yet while what is "easy" is stigmatized in the song, what is "popular" is not. Ives viewed popular music not as commercial but as "populist"—music expressing "the voice of the people"—and loved to quote it symbolically. He sets the words "over there" to a snatch from George M. Cohan's rousing World War I morale song of the same name, and he reminds Americans of their patriotic duty in the song's final measures with an equally brief snatch from the national anthem. Allusions like these to popular and patriotic songs are chiefly responsible for Ives's reputation as an "Americanist" (or American regionalist) composer.



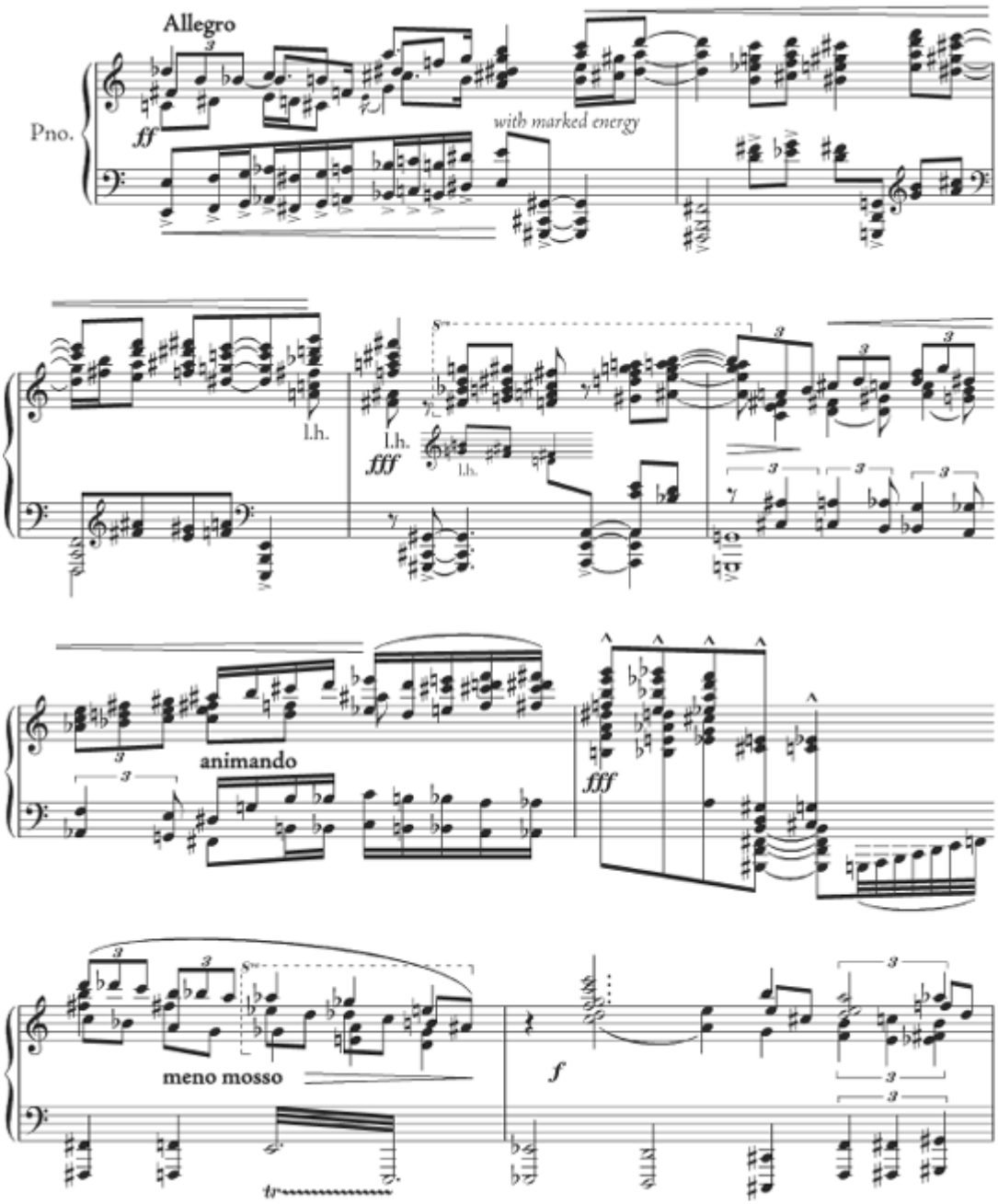


ex. 5-6 Charles Ives, "Nov. 2, 1920" (a.k.a. "An Election"), mm. 12-17

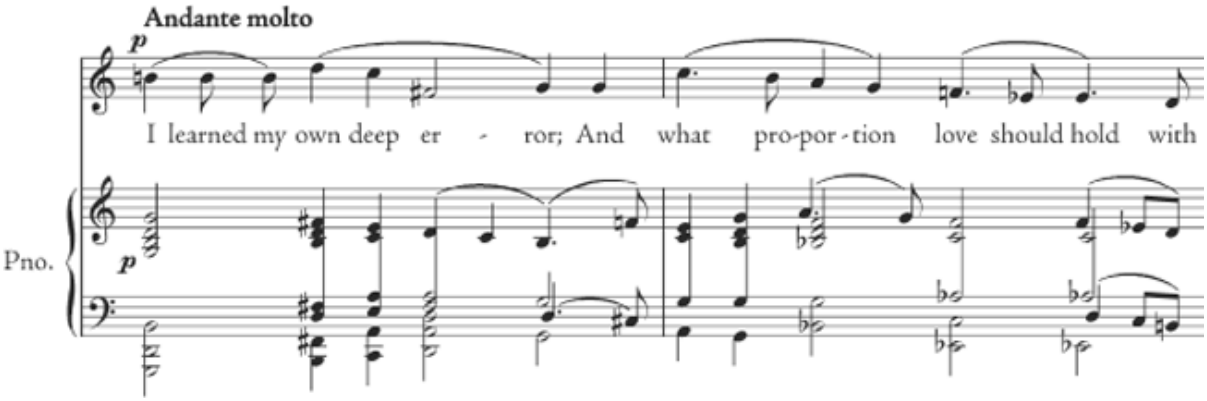
But his repertory of allusions actually ranged much further and wider than that. As this very song confirms, Ives was an "internationalist" rather than an "isolationist," and his musical idiom was by no means confined to American sources. Indeed, the most "American" thing about "Nov. 2, 1920" is not the source of its quotations, or even its style, but the fact that Ives saw fit to use his art to engage in political debate in the spirit of American participatory democracy. The "Note" appended to the score even seems to equate the song, in its intended effect, with an actual political pamphlet Ives had written in favor of a Constitutional amendment that would substitute direct popular referendums for many of the functions and duties performed by the Congress, especially in the conduct of foreign policy.

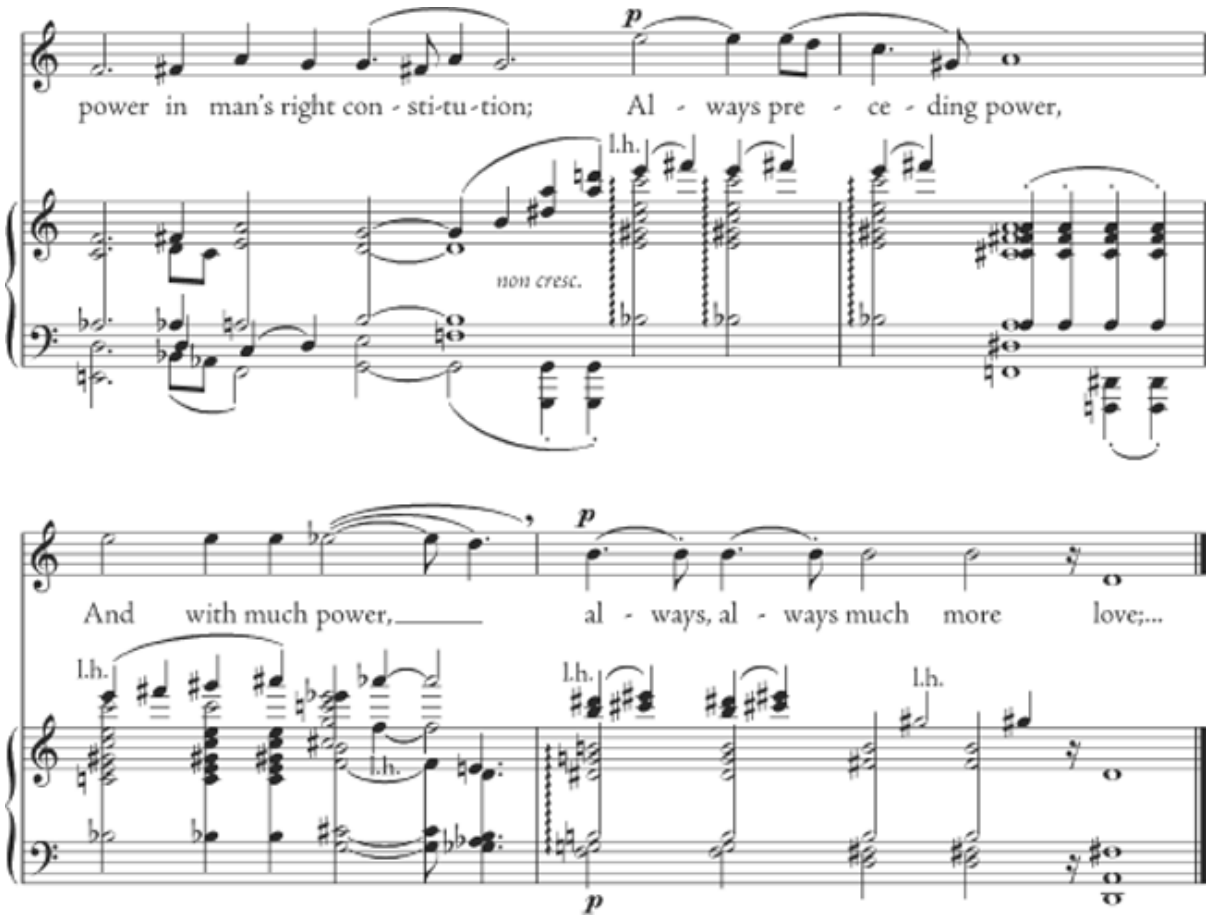
And yet that very "Note" falls back on gender stereotyping when Ives complains that "the voice of the people sounding through the mouth of the [political] parties, becomes somewhat emasculated," and the song makes sneering reference to "all the old women, male and female, [who] had their day today." It may also be pertinent to recall that the election of 1920 was the first to take place after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, which guaranteed women's suffrage, and it was widely felt (not only by sore losers) that the women's vote had helped the handsome Harding win the office he would later disgrace with scandal.

But lest it be thought that Ives's idealism was always tinged with its opposite, and that consonant traditional harmony was only present in his music to be mocked as effeminate, consider the song from "Paracelsus," to a text by Robert Browning, in which the dichotomy seems to work precisely the other way round in the expression of a "purer" (that is, less overtly political) strain of transcendentalism. Philippus Aureolus Bombast von Hohenheim, known as Paracelsus (1493–1541), was a Swiss alchemist and physician who made important contributions to the use of chemical agents in the treatment of disease. Browning's dramatic poem (1835) is a meditation on pride, in which the brilliant Paracelsus is portrayed as having ultimately failed to do the good that was within his grasp to accomplish because of a lack of empathy toward his less gifted fellow men. The lines Ives set are uttered by Paracelsus in response to the altruistic example of the poet Aprile, who has revealed to him his error in pursuing power to the exclusion of love.



ex. 5-7a Charles Ives, "From 'Paracelsus,' " mm. 1-6





ex. 5-7b Charles Ives, "From 'Paracelsus,' " ***Andante molto*****, end**

Here the complex and "difficult" idiom—expressed in an introductory piano solo in as overloaded a texture as the mind can conceive or the hand perform—is associated with the futile quest for power (Ex. 5-7a). The lucid and consonant final page (Ex. 5-7b), with its cadence on an unalloyed D major triad that is presented completely without irony, represents the superior force of love, showing the way to the simplicity of a higher truth. The form of the song—progressive clarification, approaching the sublime resolution of all conflict and variety—is as characteristic of Ives as any other.

Sometimes called Ives's "epiphany" form, it illustrates two important aspects of his maximalism. First, the dissonant and "modern" is not necessarily given preference over the traditional and consonant. Unlike that of many European maximalists, Ives's idiom is not driven by an ideal of evolutionary stylistic progress. It obeys no mandate of history. Rather, in a manner that is often compared with American ideals of democratic pluralism, all styles coexist in Ives's music, each with its own expressive and symbolic tasks to perform. And second, it is only for the sake of expression and representation that style is developed, never for its own sake. As Ives liked to put it, it is "substance" that determines (and is therefore prior to) "manner."[20] Thus, when the substance or expressive purpose demanded it, Ives was prepared to compose in a relatively traditional manner or style—a "Parker" style, so to speak—at any time throughout his career. His mature music therefore shows little in the way of stylistic "evolution," which is one reason why it fits the modernist template so poorly.

Indeed, he despised a great deal of modern music (especially by Debussy, Ravel, and Stravinsky) that seemed to him to be more concerned with manner—style for its own sake—than with substance. We may deduce from this, perhaps, that his idea of substance, or the proper expressive content for music, was essentially (and conventionally) Germanic. That is, it continued to value "human content," the representation of emotion and spirituality above all, and passionately to resist the tendency identified in chapter 2 as "dehumanization."

Notes:

(13) Henry and Sidney Cowell, *Charles Ives and His Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 106. The Cowells' source was an unpublished typescript, "A Connecticut Yankee in Music," by Lucille Fletcher, who heard it from Ives himself (see Maynard Solomon, "Charles Ives: Some Questions of Veracity," *JAMS* XL [1987]: 466).

(14) Rossiter, p. 18.

(15) Ives, *Memos*, p. 74.

(16) Boris Schwarz, "Elman, Mischa," in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. VIII (2nd ed., New York: Grove, 2001), p. 157.

(17) Charles Ives, *Essays Before a Sonata* (1920); in *Essays Before a Sonata and Other Writings by Charles Ives*, ed. Howard Boatwright (New York: Norton, 1964), p. 84.

(18) Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), p. 184.

(19) Harding coined the term in a campaign speech given on 14 May 1920, in which he announced that the nation needed "not nostrums but normalcy."

(20) See, for example, *Essays Before a Sonata*, p. 75.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Charles Ives

Elliott Carter

TERMS OF RECEPTION

Chapter: CHAPTER 5 Containing Multitudes (Transcendentalism, II)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

"From 'Paracelsus' " bears the date 1921, nearly the latest date an Ives score can bear; for in that year his composing career, save only a few exceptional efforts, came effectively to an end. The reason usually given for his creative cessation is a severe heart attack suffered in September 1918, which left him in precarious health for the remaining 35 years of his life. In semiretirement from business, Ives began putting his manuscripts in order and prepared two items—the Second Piano Sonata and *114 Songs*—for private publication. They were issued, respectively, in 1920 and 1922. A few other compositions were published, by subscription only, in the *New Music Quarterly* series edited by Henry Cowell (1897–1965), a California composer devoted to the cause of disseminating what he called "ultramodern music." And one, an "Orchestral Set" called *Three Places in New England*, was issued by a commercial firm in 1935. Except for a campaign song for the Republican candidate, William McKinley, in the election of 1896, it was the only conventionally published Ives score to see print before World War II. Very gradually, performers began discovering his music and introducing it to audiences, in most cases long after it was written.

As Robert Crunden, a historian of the Progressive Age who has written perceptively about Ives and his strangely misshapen career, has put it, "prizes and publicity finally poured in as ill health made their enjoyment difficult."[21] Describing Ives's life, with rueful irony, in terms of the conventional format associated with great composers since Beethoven, Crunden observes "three phases," which he calls "youthful normality, creative vigor in both music and business, and then decline amidst growing fame." But as Crunden also suggests, the most telling of Ives's "periods" has been the fourth—his posthumous reception, which turned him retrospectively, and at the cost of considerable distortion, into a modernist giant.

The height of Ives's prestige and (somewhat later) his popularity actually crosscut Crunden's third and fourth phases, lasting from 1939 roughly until his birth centenary in 1974. During this period he was honored as a (or even as *the*) founding father of American music—its first original master, its Great Emancipator, and the author of its Declaration of Independence from Europe (or, as the conductor Leonard Bernstein put it at the time of the Second Symphony premiere in 1951, "our Washington, Lincoln and Jefferson of music"). The event that triggered the boom was the first public performance of the complete Second Piano Sonata, subtitled *Concord, Mass., 1840–60*, by the pianist John Kirkpatrick, in a New York recital that took place on 20 January 1939.

Actually it was not so much the performance itself that did the triggering as it was a remarkable review that it elicited from a seasoned and influential critic. Lawrence Gilman (1878–1939), the chief music reviewer for the *New York Herald Tribune* since 1923, head program annotator for the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, and author of half a dozen widely read books on modern music beginning with Wagner, greeted Kirkpatrick's performance with a delirium of praise. In words that have been reprinted more frequently, perhaps, than any others in the annals of American music criticism, Gilman pronounced Ives's Sonata to be "exceptionally great music—it is, indeed, the greatest music composed by an American, and the most deeply and essentially American in impulse and implication."[22] Kirkpatrick's performance, he added, "was that of a poet and a master, an unobtrusive minister of genius."

Gilman's extraordinary sympathy for the work was the result of a deeper sympathy with Ives's purposes, which in the case of the Second Piano Sonata was more than ever the translation into music of the spiritual essence and effect of transcendentalist philosophy. No less than Ives's music, Gilman's criticism—to quote Wayne Shirley, a music bibliographer and historian of American music—was "rooted in the tradition that holds that music is ideally a vehicle for the expression of philosophical ideas."[23] Gilman provided his readers with a valuable key to those ideas as embodied in Ives's music.

But Gilman's review also contained a negative, defensively chauvinistic component that played a major role in the subsequent distortion of Ives's legacy. Referring acerbically to "the two distinguished composers"—probably the old visitor Dvořák and the more recent Swiss immigrant Ernest Bloch (1880–1959)—"who are sometimes said to have produced the best music written in America," Gilman dismissed them with the simple observation that they "cannot be called Americans at all: they were born in Europe, and their music is about as 'American' in quality as the Mediterranean or the Quai d'Orsay," while "Charles Ives is as unchallengeably American as the Yale Fence," and therefore musically authentic in a way that a Dvořák or a Bloch could never be. Nor did Gilman stop even there. He capped his eulogy by calling attention to the fact that

> Before he was twenty-five, [Ives] had begun those audacious experiments in the organization of sound and the development of scales and counterpoint and rhythms which, for those who have studied their outcome in his later works, make the typical utterances of Schönberg sound like Haydn sonatas. And we are to bear in mind that when Ives was evolving this incredible ultra-modernism of the American nineties, Schönberg, then in his early twenties, had not yet ventured even upon the adolescent Wagnerism of his 'Verklärte Nacht'; and the youthful Stravinsky was playing marbles in Oranienbaum.

Wittingly or not, Gilman had set the terms of Ives's assimilation not to the esthetics of transcendentalism or any other expressive tendency, but to that of modernism, the neo-Hegelian historiographical legacy of the New German School, which chiefly values artists in proportion to their technical and formal innovations. It was not the best vantage point from which to view Ives (or, some might argue, any artist). It made for trouble, and his serious devaluing, later; for it turned the Ives boom into a bubble that might easily be pricked. If the Great Emancipator were merely the Great Anticipator (as a skeptical joke of the period had it), then the basis of his reputation would stop being what his work accomplished (in the present) and become simply a matter of when it was written (in the past). Ives became vulnerable to musicological (or pseudomusicological) attack.

The first attacker was Elliott Carter (b. 1908), a famous composer who had known Ives as a boy and whose attitudes toward his former mentor were, as often happens, full of filial conflicts (or "Oedipal" ones, to speak the language of pop psychology). During the Ives centennial year Carter sounded the most jarringly dissonant note when he reminisced to an interviewer about

> a visit on a late afternoon to his house on East 74th Street [in Manhattan], when I was directed to a little top-floor room where Ives sat at a little upright piano with score pages strewn around on the floor and on tables—this must have been around 1929. He was working on, I think, *Three Places in New England*, getting the score ready for performance. A new score was being derived from the older one to which he was adding and changing, turning octaves into sevenths and ninths, and adding dissonant notes. Since then, I have often wondered at exactly what date a lot of the music written early in his life received its last shot of dissonance and polyrhythm. In this case he showed me quite simply how he was improving the score. I got the impression that he might have frequently jacked up the level of dissonance of many works as his tastes changed. While the question no longer seems important, one could wonder whether he was as early a precursor of "modern" music as is sometimes made out. A study of the manuscripts would probably make this clear.[24]

But Carter certainly knew that the terms of Ives's reception, and the way in which his achievement was by then described in all the history books, made the question not only supremely important but also very

threatening to the composer's reputation. The sly invitation implied in the last sentence was quickly taken up by a number of scholars—in particular Maynard Solomon, a musicologist with an interest in psychoanalysis who had already published a psychobiography of Beethoven and would later write one about Mozart. The article that ensued from his investigation, "Charles Ives: Some Questions of Veracity," quickly became a cause célèbre following its publication in 1987.

Relying to a large extent on the work of other scholars, Solomon presented evidence that Ives had deliberately altered some of his manuscripts so as to mislead researchers into accepting earlier dates for some of his works than were in fact the case. Solomon interpreted the composer's alleged mendacity as an effort generally to protect his precious reputation as an isolated "original" (in keeping with the transcendentalist individualism expressed in the first epigraph at the top of this chapter), and specifically to enhance his idolized father's role (rather than that of any European contemporary) in the formation of his radical style.

And yet the appearance of image-polishing seemed to cast a troubling reflection on Ives's personal integrity, and Solomon did suggest that Ives himself had been caught up, following Gilman's celebrated review, in the modernist (or "historicist") tendency to "confuse the patent-office with the Pantheon, to regard the invention of a new technique as the most significant measure of creativity."[25] Solomon warned that "it cannot be sufficiently stressed that the value of Ives's music is wholly independent of issues of priority and modernism."[26] But like Carter's, his disclaimer rang false. To attribute Ives's actions to "an obsessive concern over issues of priority,"[27] without acknowledging the obvious fact that his own research had been similarly motivated, made the article look like a vendetta. It led to a huge dispute among Ives specialists, tinged with a hostility that belied everyone's claim to be dispassionately (or "objectively") seeking the truth.

The row over dating seemed especially unfortunate since the arguments of both sides, whether upholding it or impugning it, were focused on Ives's reputation as a modernist—a label that, as Crunden and other historians have convincingly argued, is the wrong one to apply. For a while, musicology seemed unable to cope with the idea that a composer could be a radical maximalist without being a modernist—that is, without a primary commitment to technical innovation, and without challenging (let alone revolting against) contemporary social norms.

Ives's esthetic outlook is far better understood when its connection with the European—and particularly the German—past is acknowledged. Like the transcendentalism to which he professed allegiance, his artistic aims and commitments were neither as radical nor as indigenously American as often claimed. And his radical techniques mostly celebrated the very opposite of progress: their purpose, paradoxically, was to evoke—nostalgically, unironically—a vanished (or imaginary) rural or small-town America. To put Ives's fundamental expressive concerns in a proper focus, two works in particular (or movements from them) will need a close-up look: the *Concord* Sonata, the subject of Lawrence Gilman's excited praise, and *Three Places in New England*, the subject of Elliott Carter's equivocal memoir.

Notes:

(21) Robert M. Crunden, "Review Essay: On Charles Ives," *Modernism/Modernity* IV, no. 3 (September 1997): 155.

(22) Lawrence Gilman, "A Masterpiece of American Music Heard Here for the First Time," *New York Herald Tribune*, 21 January 1939, p. 9.

(23) Wayne Shirley, "Gilman, Lawrence," in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. IX (2nd ed., New York: Grove, 2001), p. 870.

(24) Vivian Perlis, ed., *Charles Ives Remembered: An Oral History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 138.

(25) Maynard Solomon, “Charles Ives: Some Questions of Veracity,” *JAMS* XL (1987): 453.

(26) *Ibid*., p. 466.

(27) *Ibid*., p. 470.

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See also from Grove Music Online
Charles Ives

César Franck

MANNER AND SUBSTANCE

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At the very least, the obsession with dating (even to the extent that Ives himself, in his postcomposing phase, may have abetted it) was fundamentally un-Ivesian, since it was wholly concerned with "manner" (the way something was said), rather than "substance" (the something itself). To understand the "something" we need to know what composers Ives took as expressive examples. The answer to this question may be surprising, since Ives's models of substance were none of them composers who shared Ives's interest in a radical manner. Rather, they were composers who expressed orthodox spiritual values, and did so in a way that by the early twentieth century was deemed distinctly old-fashioned, if not downright unfashionable.

In the epilogue to *Essays before a Sonata*, a little book he published and distributed alongside the *Concord* Sonata in order to explain its "substance," Ives indulged in some reminiscences of his own changing tastes:

> A man remembers, when he was a boy of about fifteen years, hearing his music-teacher (and father), who had just returned from a performance of *Siegfried*, say with a look of anxious surprise that somehow or other he felt ashamed of enjoying the music as he did, for beneath it all he was conscious of an undercurrent of make-believe—the bravery was make-believe, the love was make-believe, the passion, the virtue, all make-believe, as was the dragon; P. T. Barnum would have been brave enough to have gone out and captured a live one! But that same boy at twenty-five was listening to Wagner with enthusiasm—his reality was real enough to inspire a devotion. The "Preislied" [Prize-Song from *Die Meistersinger*], for instance, stirred him deeply. But when he became middle-aged—and long before the Hohenzollern hog-marched into Belgium [that is, before World War I made everything German unfashionable in America]—this music had become cloying, the melodies threadbare—a sense of something commonplace—yes—of make-believe, came. These feelings were fought against for association's sake and because of gratitude for bygone pleasures, but the former beauty and nobility were not there, and in their place stood irritating intervals of descending fourths and fifths. Those once transcendent progressions, luxuriant suggestions of Debussy chords of the ninth, eleventh, etc., were becoming slimy. An unearned exultation—a sentimentality deadening something within—hides around in the music. Wagner seems less and less to measure up to the substance and reality of César Franck, Brahms, d'Indy, or even Elgar (with all his tiresomeness); the wholesomeness, manliness, humility, and deep spiritual, possibly religious, feeling of these men seem missing and not made up for by his (Wagner's) manner and eloquence, even if greater than theirs (which is very doubtful).[28]

The strictures against Wagner and Debussy are familiar: they express Ives's usual, very conservative (or at least very unmodernist) resistance to decadence and sensuality, along with the (typically American? typically Yankee?) fear of effeminacy that we have noted before. But the list of antidotes, with the exception of Brahms, can seem a bit bizarre. A taste for Franck, d'Indy, and Elgar was by the 1920s, when Ives enumerated them, as dated as a taste for Rossini would have been in the heyday of Wagnerism. Their religiosity and "uplift" were among the things discredited, as we shall see, by the "Hohenzollern hog-march"—the imperialist war to which Ives himself makes reference—at least as far as a younger generation was concerned. Ives's maximalism, at least as expressed in the *Concord* Sonata, begins to seem

an attempt to give new life—or at least some artificial life-support—to an esthetic stance that had become in modernist eyes tarnished if not altogether outmoded, but one that Ives continued to cherish for its once-unsullied idealism.

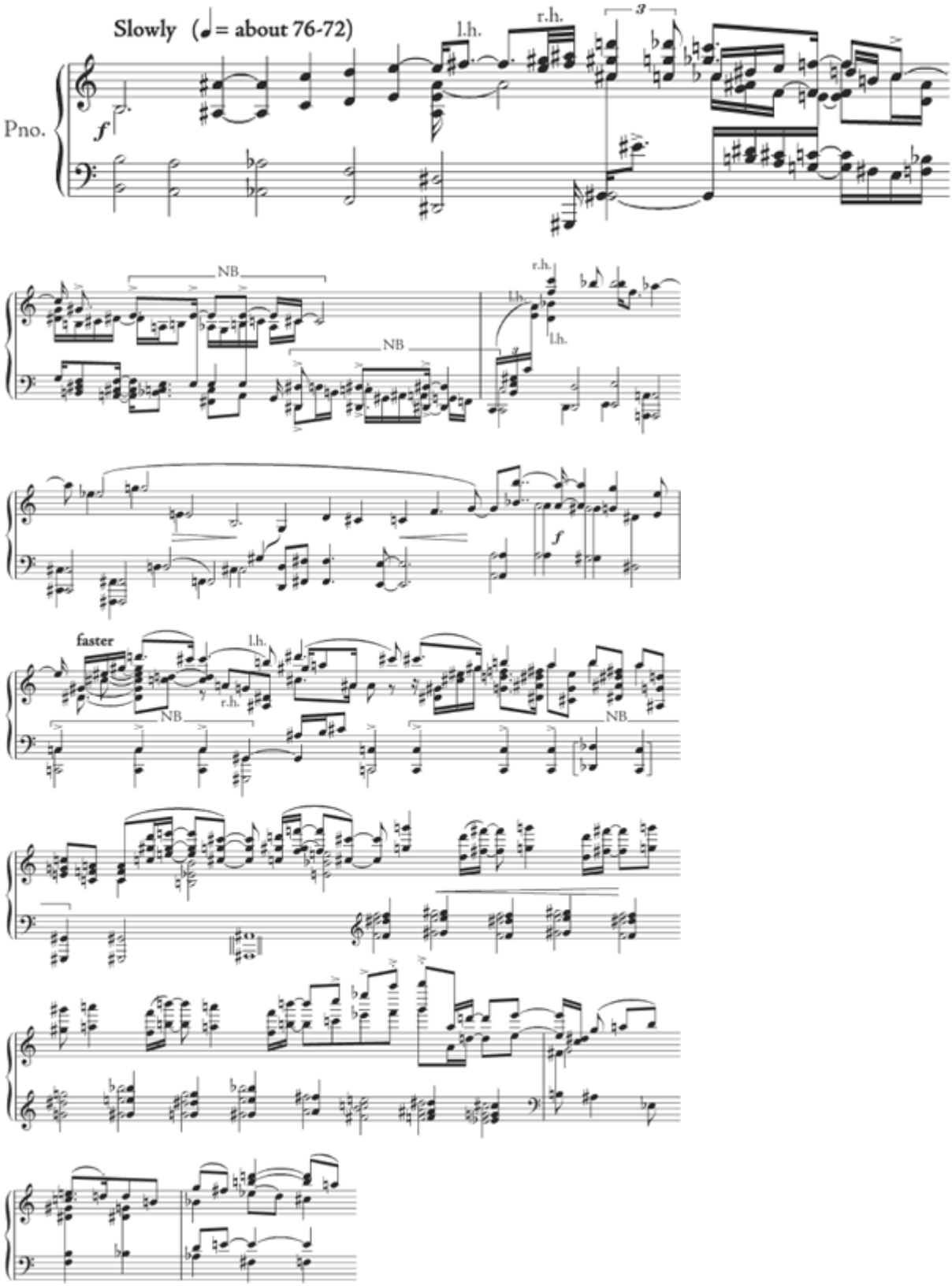
Franck appears to have been Ives's unlikely special favorite. That may have been partly due to his organist's background; Ives kept a reproduction of Jeanne Rongier's portrait of Franck seated at the organ tacked to the inside door of his music studio. In any case, Elliott Carter has reported that Ives's "main love" was for "Bach, Brahms and Franck, for he found in them spiritual elevation and nobility, which, like many a critic of his generation, he felt contemporary music had simplified away."[29] If, following this lead, we take Franck (rather than the more obvious Liszt) to have been Ives's particular model in the *Concord* Sonata, his attempt at a sort of antimodernist spiritual revival turns out to have been surprisingly specific.

Franck's Symphony in D minor had a decisive impact on American composers, particularly on the "Boston school" of which Horatio Parker, Ives's Yale professor, was a latter-day member. In its "aspiring" quality and its emphasis on the "moral obligations of the artist"[30] (to quote Edward Burlingame Hill, Parker's Harvard counterpart), the Franck Symphony was the most Germanic of French symphonies, and the greatest of all standard-bearers for the supremacy of "substance" over "manner." Like all nineteenth-century symphonies in D minor (and many others besides), it was haunted by the lofty spirit of Beethoven's Ninth; but it also mined Beethoven's last quartet for an emblematic motive that audibly haunted the work and carried its spiritual message from first movement to last.

Ives made a similar appropriation from Beethoven in the *Concord* Sonata: the first four notes of the Fifth Symphony, perhaps the most famous (and at once the most heavily fraught and the most hackneyed) single motive in all of music by the time Ives chose it to pervade his work and carry its spiritual message through all the movements. Each of Ives's movements bore the name of a Transcendentalist writer (or family of writers) associated with Concord — Emerson, Hawthorne, "the Alcotts," Thoreau — and attempted to represent or interpret the gist of that writer's message. Most of the *Essays before a Sonata* (the title of which was already an evocation of Emerson) was devoted to describing the way in which, Ives felt, his music embodied their ideas. The overriding message that united them all, the essence of New England transcendentalism, was symbolized in the Beethoven motive, to which Ives devoted a special explanation in the chapter on Emerson:

> There is an "oracle" at the beginning of the *Fifth Symphony*; in those four notes lies one of Beethoven's greatest messages. We would place its translation above the relentlessness of fate knocking at the door [as Beethoven himself once described it to an interviewer], above the greater human message of destiny and strive to bring it towards the spiritual message of Emerson's revelations, even to the "common heart" of Concord — the soul of humanity knocking at the door of the divine mysteries, radiant in the faith that it *will* be opened — and the human become the divine![31]

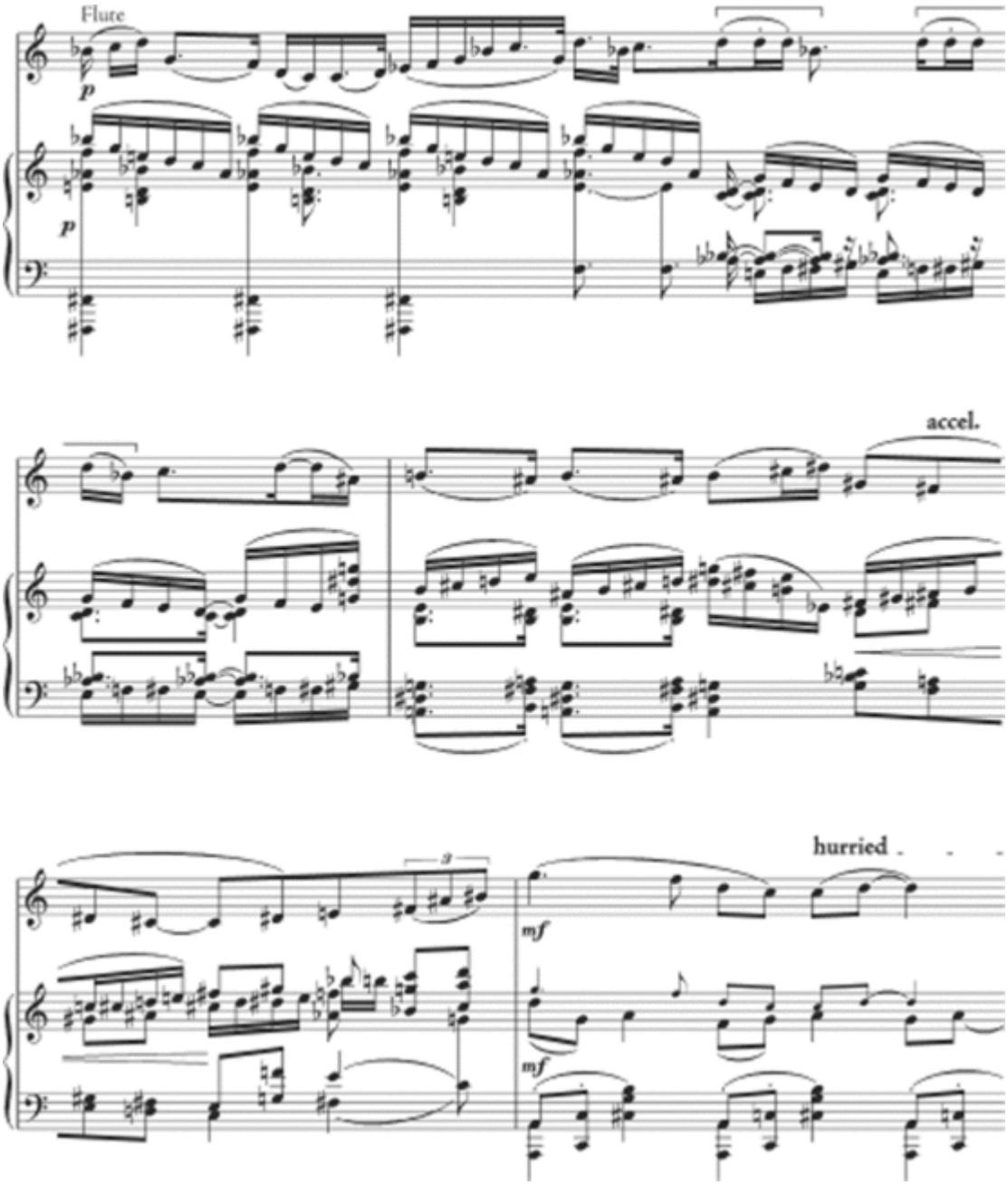
From the "Paracelsus"-like opening page of "Emerson" (Ex. 5-8) to the quiescent closing pages of "Thoreau" with their pastoral flute obbligato (Ex. 5-9), the Fifth Symphony motif suffuses and unifies the otherwise sprawling *Concord* Sonata. "Emerson," itself (according to *Essays before a Sonata*) the portrait of an oracle, abounds especially with Beethoven's call, sometimes presented as a major third, sometimes minor. The accented repeated notes, first in the right hand then in the left, in the opening bars mark its first appearances; thereafter, one easily uncovers at least a hundred more. The optional flute solo at the end of "Thoreau" — an evocation of Thoreau's description of his own nocturnal flute-playing by the side of Walden Pond — places the Fifth Symphony idea in the context of a long melody that sums up many of the sonata's themes. In the *Essays before a Sonata* Ives associated it with "human faith." Its beginning is first prefigured on the second page of "Emerson," in the middle voice over a Fifth Symphony bass. The final dying-away at the end of "Thoreau" is a variation on the Fifth Symphony motif that suggests a quiet ecstasy of affirmation by replacing the falling third by a fourth repeated note — utter unity or "wholeness" (Emerson's "the ONE") is attained.

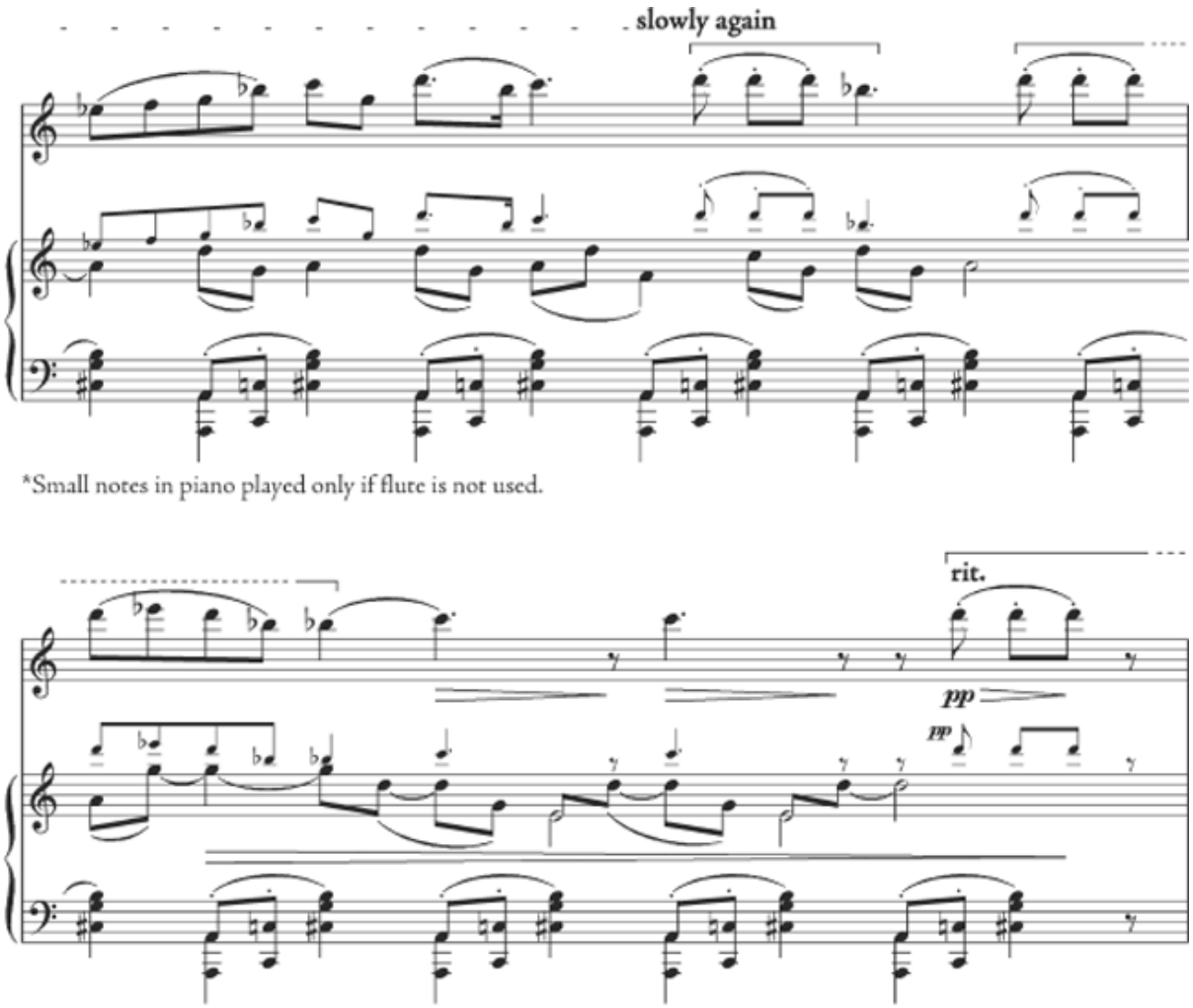


ex. 5-8 Charles Ives, "Concord" Sonata, I ("Emerson"), beginning

On the first page of "The Alcotts" (Ex. 5-10), a domestic portrait in a distinctly tamer style than the rest, the Fifth Symphony motif is presented in yet another context, that of indigenous American hymnody. As the Ives scholar J. Peter Burkholder has shown, Ives conflates the Beethoven gambit with the openings of two well-known tunes from the Protestant hymnal—Simeon B. Marsh's *Martyn* (or *Jesus, Lover of My Soul*) and

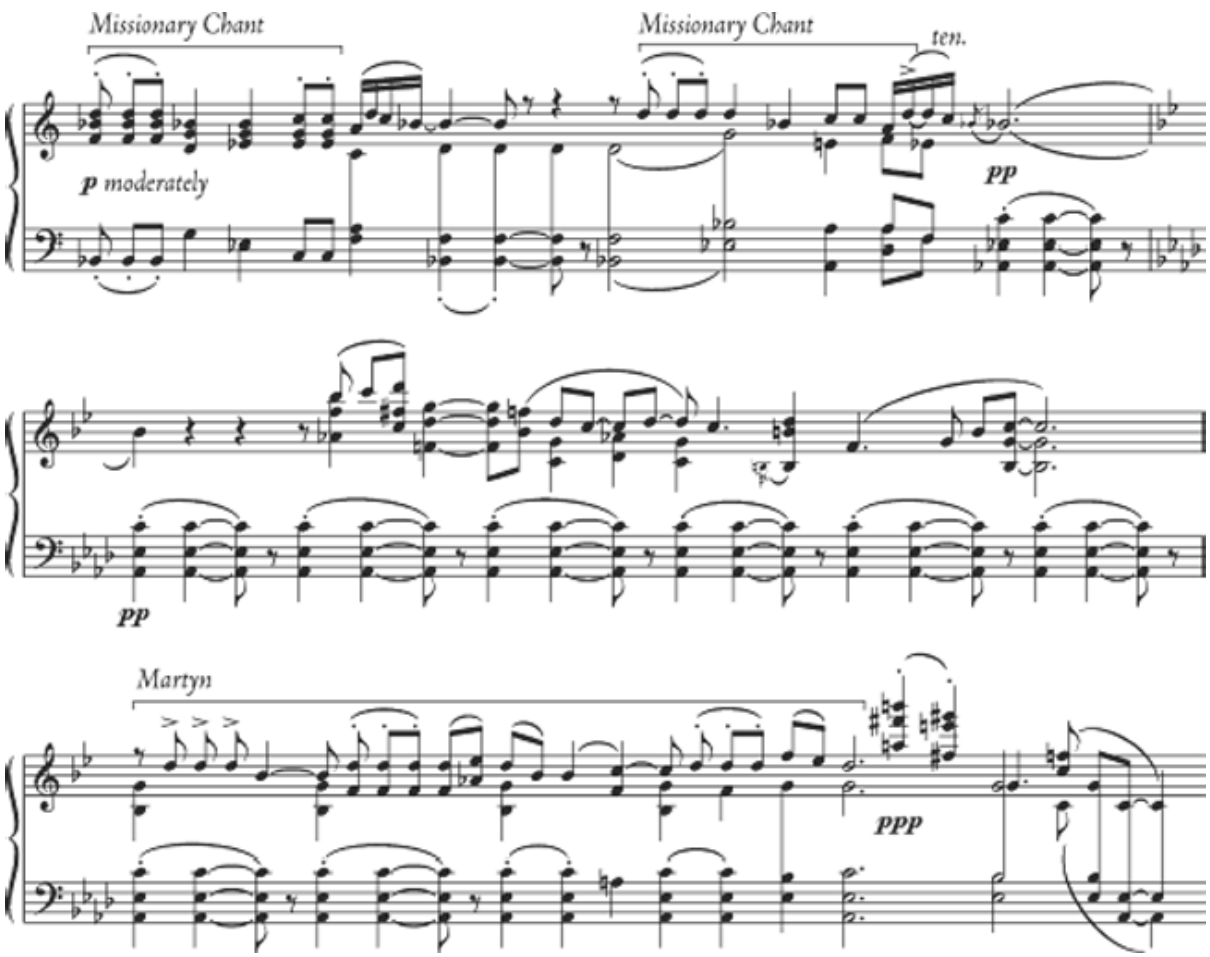
The Missionary Chant (*Ye Christian Heralds*) by Charles Zeuner (Ex. 5-11)—as if to depict the divine presence that informs the homely devotions of the famous New England literary family (or any sincere religious exercise).[32]





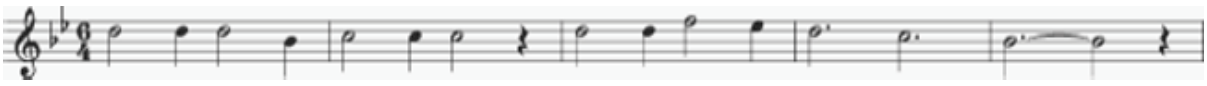
ex. 5-9 Charles Ives, "Concord" Sonata, end of IV ("Thoreau")

There is an uncanny resonance between Ives's "Transcendental" reinterpretation of Beethoven and the uplifting interpretations of Franck's Symphony that ran rampant with the spread of "music appreciation," especially in America. A major source of such morally edifying art interpretation was the English critic Matthew Arnold, and, as it happens, one of Ives's other professors at Yale, William Lyon Phelps (1865–1943), with whom Ives studied English and American literature, was one of America's leading "Arnoldians," and a specialist in the poetry of Robert Browning (the author of "Paracelsus"), to whom Ives dedicated an overture. As Burkholder has emphasized, Ives nurtured a special regard for "Billy" Phelps for the rest of his life, corresponded with him in later years, and even sent him a copy of *Essays before a Sonata*, which Phelps enthusiastically (if somewhat cursorily) reviewed in the *Yale Alumni Weekly*. "Some of the roots of the 'Concord' Sonata," Burkholder has argued, "reach back to Phelps's course, where Ives must have studied Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, and the Alcotts in depth."[33] Some of Ives's mature ideas about music may also owe something to Phelps's example. Phelps collected his thoughts on the subject—many of them adapted straight from the poetry of Browning—in a little volume published in 1930. The third epigraph at the head of this chapter, as wishfully Ivesian a thought as ever uttered, comes from it. So does this:

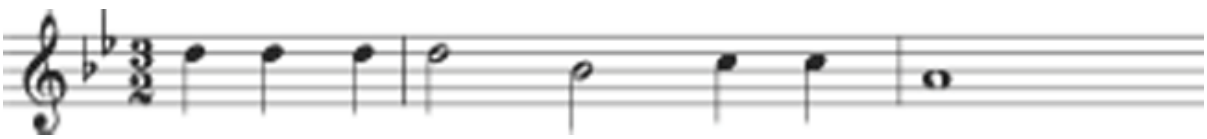


ex. 5-10 Charles Ives, "Concord" Sonata, beginning of III ("The Alcotts")

The paradox is that Music, the most universal of languages, knowing no boundary lines, should have been monopolized by the Germans.... If one collected all the music in the world written by men who were not Germans, put it together, and multiplied it by ten, the product would not equal in value the music written by Germans alone. In the Music Hall facing the lake on Michigan Avenue in Chicago, the committee placed on the façade the names of what they considered to be the five greatest composers in all history. They are Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, Schubert—all Germans. And the first names on a substitute list would also be Germans.[34]



ex. 5-11a Simeon B. Marsh, *Martyn*



ex. 5-11b Charles Zeuner, *The Missionary Chant*

And this:

> When we see the Sistine Madonna, or read *Hamlet*, we admire the extraordinary power of Raphael, of Shakespeare. But when we hear the Ninth Symphony, *we are listening to the voice of God*. Beethoven was more passive than active, the channel through which flowed the Divine Will.[35]

These conventionally Romantic and conventionally Germanocentric ideas were Ives's, too, despite his predilections for regionalisms à la Dvořák. Like Dvořák, Ives believed in the ennobling force of the "beautiful forms of art," that is to say the forms and techniques of Germanic instrumental music and of the composers who wrote it, whether or not of German birth. In no sense was he a rebel, whether in the name of America or in any other cause, against the reverent Europeanized esthetics, or even against the tastes, of his elders; he wanted, rather, to give them a more emphatic, more personalized, more ideal (and yes, perhaps a more "masculine") expression, and that prompted a certain blustery uncouthness of manner. But the substance remained exactly what it had been before. That is certainly maximalism. But just as certainly it is not modernism.

fig. 5-5a Matthew Arnold (1822–1888), ca. 1844.

Notes:

(28) *Essays Before a Sonata*, pp. 72–73.

(29) Elliott Carter, "The Case of Mr. Ives" (1939), in *The Writings of Elliott Carter*, eds. Else Stone and Kurt Stone (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), p. 48.

(30) Edward Burlingame Hill, *Modern French Music* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924), p. 36.

(31) *Essays Before a Sonata*, p. 36.

(32) J. Peter Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the Uses of Musical Borrowing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 195.

(33) J. Peter Burkholder, *Charles Ives: The Ideas Behind the Music* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 75.

(34) William Lyon Phelps, *Music*, pp. 19–20.

(35) *Ibid*., pp. 27–28.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Charles Ives

Borrowing: 20th-century art music

NOSTALGIA

Chapter: CHAPTER 5 Containing Multitudes (Transcendentalism, II)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

fig. 5-5b William Lyon Phelps, Ives's English teacher, with a volume of Browning open before him.

The other side of the coin, where Ives's maximalism was concerned, could not have stood in greater superficial contrast to the visionary transcendentalist side. It consisted of wildly humorous scherzos—or, perhaps better, "scherzoids" (since they do not always follow the "classical" scherzo-and-trio form)—of a hearty, heavy, unsubtle (and again, one cannot help noticing, Germanic) kind reminiscent of Beethoven. The Ivesian difference was that his scherzoids were usually programmatic, and the programmatic content was almost invariably nostalgic, evoking the composer's idealized, even fictionalized, New England boyhood. Again, nothing could be less modernist than these affectionate pictures of carefree youth in a socially homogeneous and harmonious, preindustrial and pretechnological setting, in which all stylistic excesses were justified in the name of fun, or in that of "realism"—presenting things "just as they [never] were."

Like the American literary realism with which they may so easily be compared, these pictures were projections of what American cultural historians like Richard Hofstadter call the "agrarian myth"[36]

—America's own neoprimitivist fable, proclaiming the moral superiority of the unspoiled, abundant country over the polluted, corrupt and disgusting modern city. In these pieces, as Ives's biographer Jan Swafford points out, "Ives painted Danbury as the idyllic country village it had not been since his father's boyhood, if then."[37] Even when not concerned with his Danbury boyhood, Ives's scherzoids were nostalgic and resolutely innocent in their humor, and it was that innocence—that studied naivety—that guaranteed the authenticity of the radical stylistic means. Ives's own description of a piece he may never actually have written—*A Yale-Princeton Game*, sketched (according to the *Memos*) in 1898 and subtitled "Two Minutes in Sound for Two Halfs Within Bounds"—shows this connection, and the implicit guarantee, to have been entirely conscious and deliberate:

> To try to reflect a football game in sounds would cause anybody to try many combinations etc.—for instance, picturing the old wedge play (close formation)—what is more natural than starting with all hugging together in the whole chromatic scale, and gradually pushing together down to one note at the end. The suspense and excitement of spectators—strings going up and down, off and on open-string tremolos. Cheers ("Brek e Koax" [the obscene noise made by the title characters in Aristophanes's comedy *The Frogs*] etc.)—running plays (trumpets going all over, dodging, etc. etc.)—natural and fun to do and listen to—hard to play. But doing things like this (half horsing) would suggest and get one used to technical processes that could be developed in something more serious later, and quite naturally.[38]

A whole worldview (call it "realist" or call it "primitivist") is implied by Ives's obsessive insistence on using the word "natural" to describe musical experiments that ran counter to every learned (or "common") practice and convention. Also implied is the answer to the eternal question that Ives propounded at the very outset of the prologue to his *Essays before a Sonata*:

> How far is anyone justified, be he an authority or a layman, in expressing or trying to express in terms of music (in sounds, if you like) the value of anything, material, moral, intellectual, or spiritual, which is usually expressed in terms other than music?[39]

Whether the thing expressed is as lofty as Emerson's Over-soul or as earthy as a football game, the justification is found precisely in the liberation that it may prompt from the tyranny of common practice.

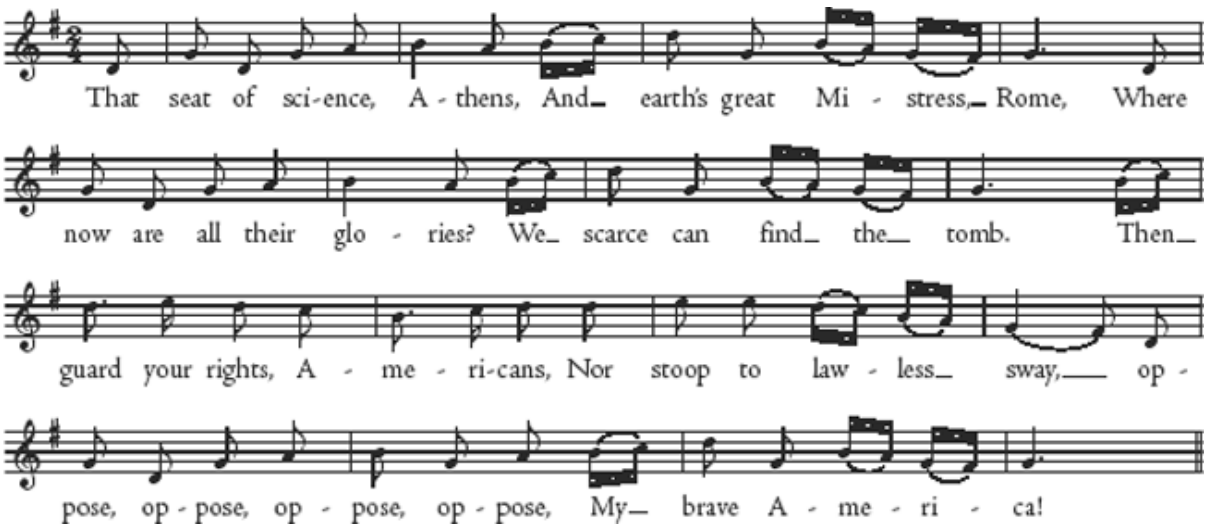
The most famous and in many ways most characteristic of Ives's "scherzoids" is "Putnam's Camp," the second of his *Three Places in New England*. The place in question is a historic site near the composer's birthplace, a field that served as campgrounds to the troops under the command of Israel Putnam, the Revolutionary War general who was Connecticut's most illustrious military hero. The composition in this case is in a form approximating the traditional scherzo-and-trio (or march-and-trio), in keeping both with the military theme and with the scenario related in Ives's program note:

> Near Redding Center, Conn., is a small park preserved as a Revolutionary Memorial; for here General Israel Putnam's soldiers had their winter quarters in 1778–1779. Long rows of stone camp fire-places still remain to stir a child's imagination. The hardships which the soldiers endured and the agitation of a few hot-heads to break camp and march to the Hartford Assembly for relief, is a part of Redding history.
>
> Once upon a "4th of July," some time ago, so the story goes, a child went there on a picnic, held under the auspices of the First Church and the Village Cornet Band. Wandering away from the rest of the children past the camp ground into the woods, he hopes to catch a glimpse of some of the old soldiers. As he rests on the hillside of laurel and hickories, the tunes of the band and the songs of the children grow fainter and fainter;—when—"mirabile dictu"—over the trees on the crest of the hill he sees a tall woman standing. She reminds him of a picture he has of the Goddess of Liberty,—but the face is sorrowful—she is pleading with the soldiers not to forget their "cause" and the great sacrifices they have made for it. But they march out of camp with fife and drum to a popular tune of the day. Suddenly a new national note is heard. Putnam is coming over the hills from the center —the soldiers

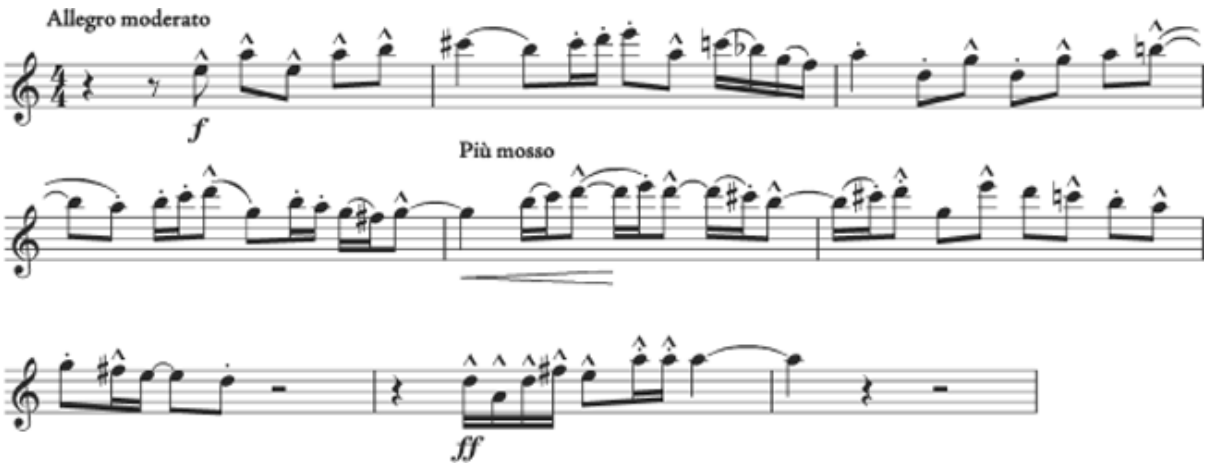
turn back and cheer. The little boy awakes, he hears the children's songs and runs down past the monument to "listen to the band" and join in the games and dances.

The repertoire of national airs at that time was meagre. Most of them were of English origin. It is a curious fact that a tune very popular with the American soldiers was "The British Grenadiers." A captain in one of Putnam's regiments put it to words, which were sung for the first time in 1779 at a patriotic meeting in the Congregational Church in Redding Center; the text is both ardent and interesting.[40]

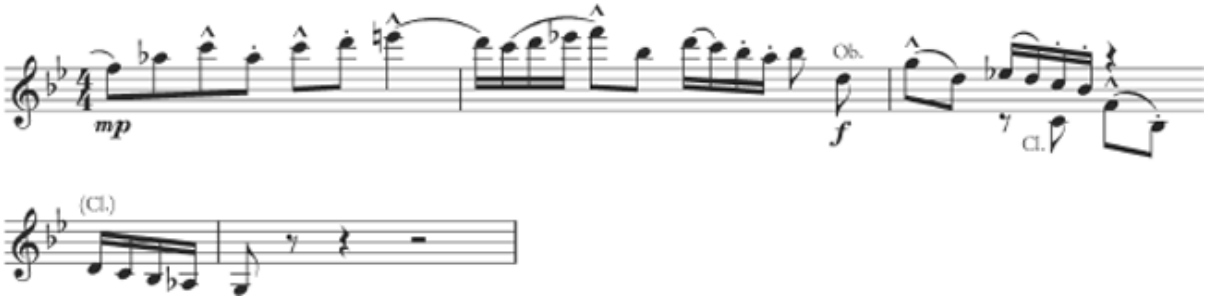
The last paragraph, evidently, is meant as a testimony to the "authenticity" of Ives's music, for the whole composition could be described, only slightly stretching a point, as a fantasy or takeoff on "The British Grenadiers" (Ex. 5-12). The tune appears almost complete, but (being part of a dream) surrealistically distorted, in the flute (=fife) part at mm. 91–97 (Ex. 5-13a). Its first fragmentary occurrence, also in the flute part (echoed by oboe and clarinet), is at mm. 14–16 (Ex. 5-13b), and it is more or less continuously present (migrating from winds to brass to strings) between m. 126 and m. 155. Thus it is the only tune that appears in all three sections of the piece.



ex. 5-12 March: *The British Grenadiers*



ex. 5-13a Charles Ives, "Putnam's Camp" (*Three Places in New England*, II), mm. 91 ff.

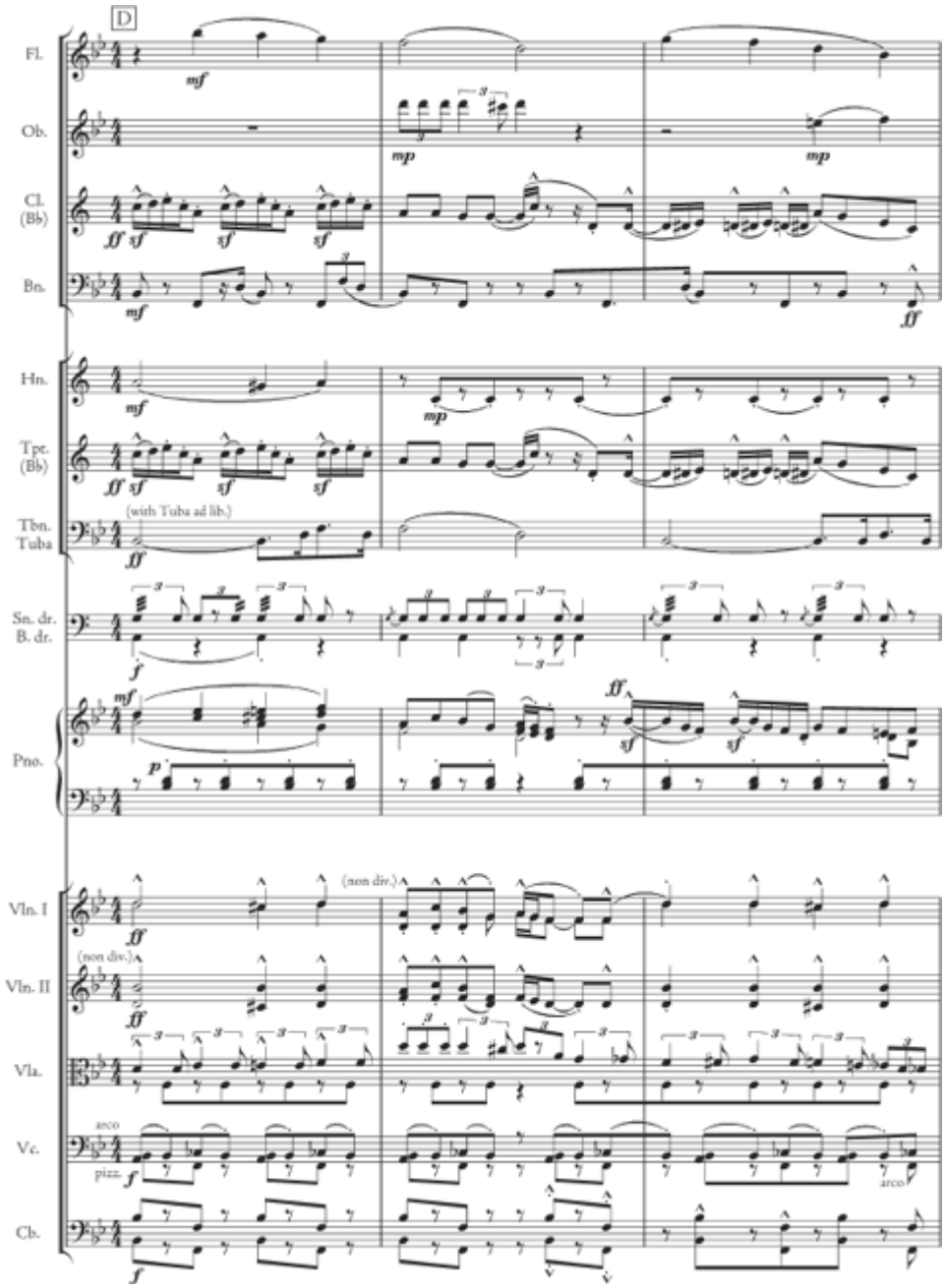


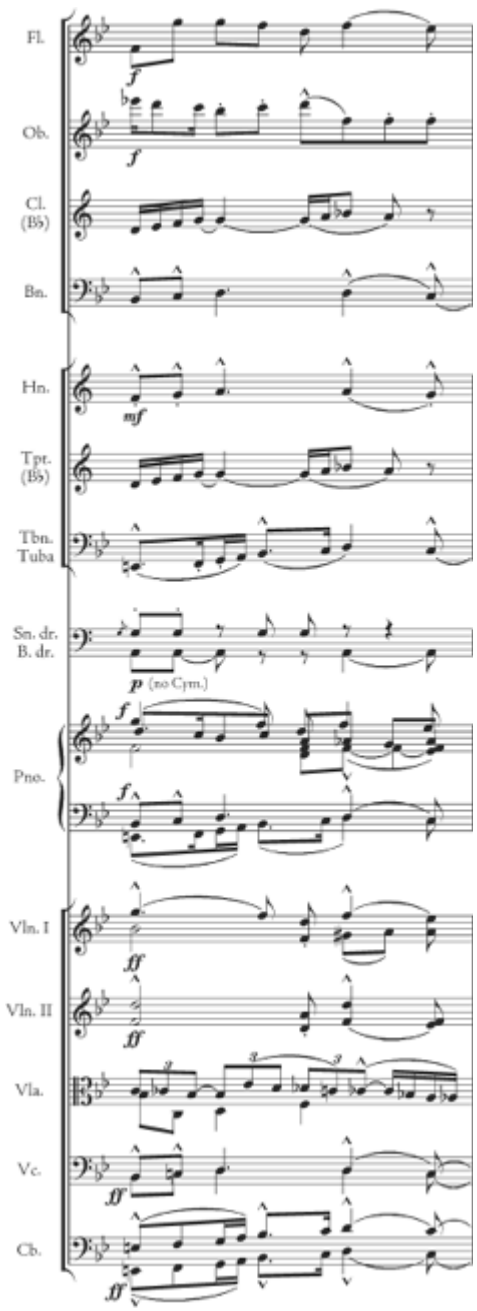
ex. 5-13b Charles Ives, "Putnam's Camp" (*Three Places in New England,* II), mm. 14 ff.

Wherever it pops up, however, it has plenty of company. In the outer sections it mainly accompanies, as a countermelody, the tune of Ives's "Country Band March," an early composition that was largely cannibalized in "Putnam's Camp," but which turns up piecemeal in many of his larger works (including "Hawthorne" in the *Concord* Sonata and the "Comedy" movement of the Fourth Symphony). The concern for period authenticity that led to the use of "The British Grenadiers" did not prevent Ives from quoting anachronistically when he felt like it. Marches by John Philip Sousa (1854–1932) make occasional appearances against the "Country Band March," including a pair in very unequal tandem at m. 27 (Ex. 5-14): the famous "Semper Fidelis" (1888) in the trombone and tuba against "Liberty Bell" (1893) in the first violas (!), where it hardly stands a chance of being heard. At the same time, to complete the collage, a snatch from Stephen Foster's "Massa's in de Cold, Cold Ground" (1852) sounds forth gaily in the flute.

To attempt a full catalog of allusions in "Putnam's Camp" would be fruitless, since some of them are so brief or so altered in the telling as to be ambiguous: is that really the Civil War song "Marchin through Georgia" in the flute at m. 147? Others stick out, as Ives meant them to, like sore thumbs: in mm. 34–35 the trumpet, flute, and first violins collaborate (or try to) in "Yankee Doodle," each instrument entering in a different key. (Here Mozart had anticipated Ives by more than a century but with similar intent in his *Musical Joke*, K. 522 [1787], subtitled "The Village Musicians.") A better joke is the very end of the piece, with the bass instruments starting up "The Star-Spangled Banner," only to be drowned out by the roar of the final chord, topped with a snatch of "Reveille" in the trumpet.

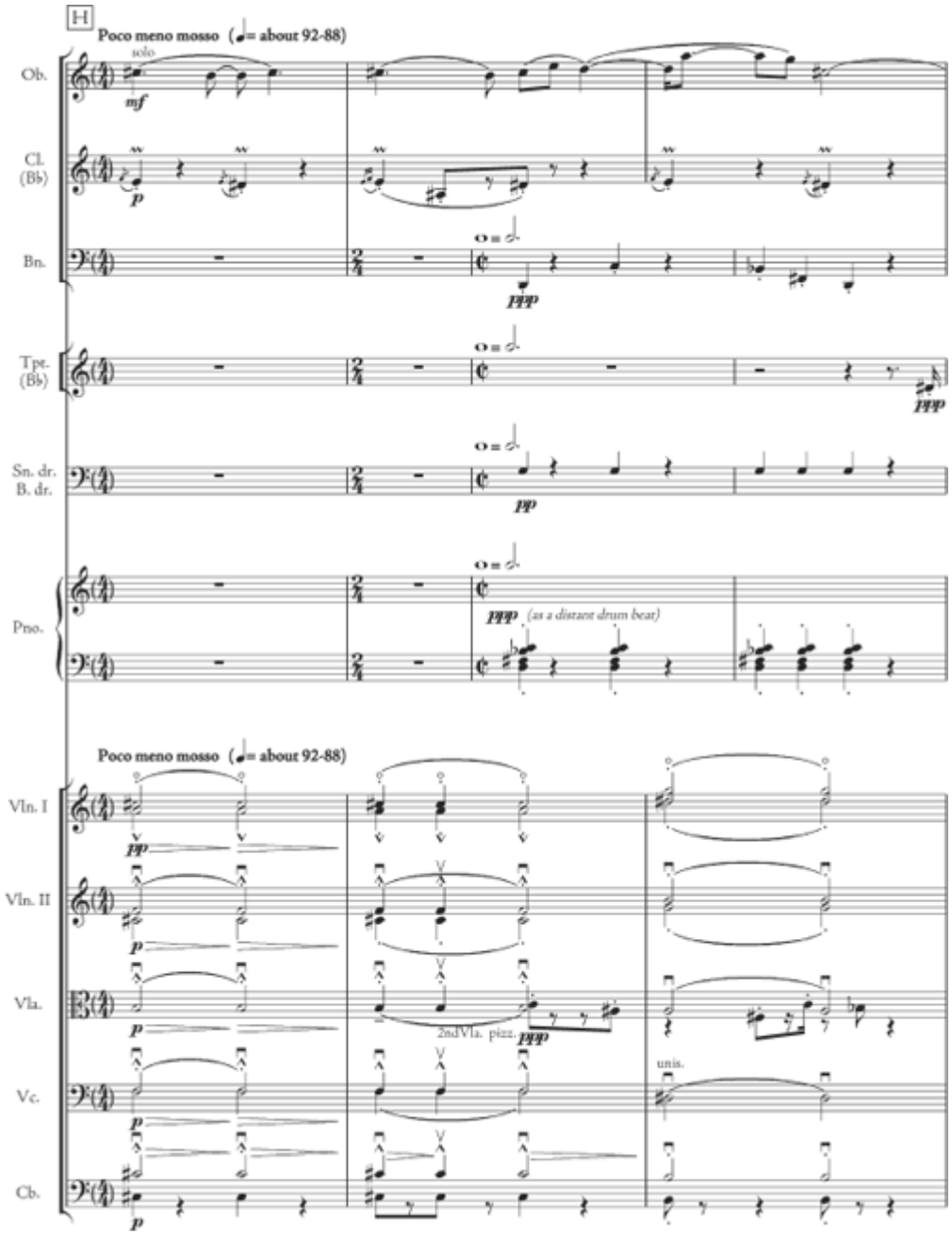
The middle section, or dream sequence, contains one of Ives's most celebrated effects. Most of it is based on another early Ives composition, called *Overture "1776."* The whole-tone (or whole-tone-scale-plus-C-sharp) chord in m. 64 with its appoggiatura—a spot that Swafford very aptly relates to the words *mirabile dictu* (wondrous to relate) in the program—marks the splice between the two early pieces. (The splice back to the "Country Band March" comes at m. 120, and the raucous coda is borrowed once again from 1776.)

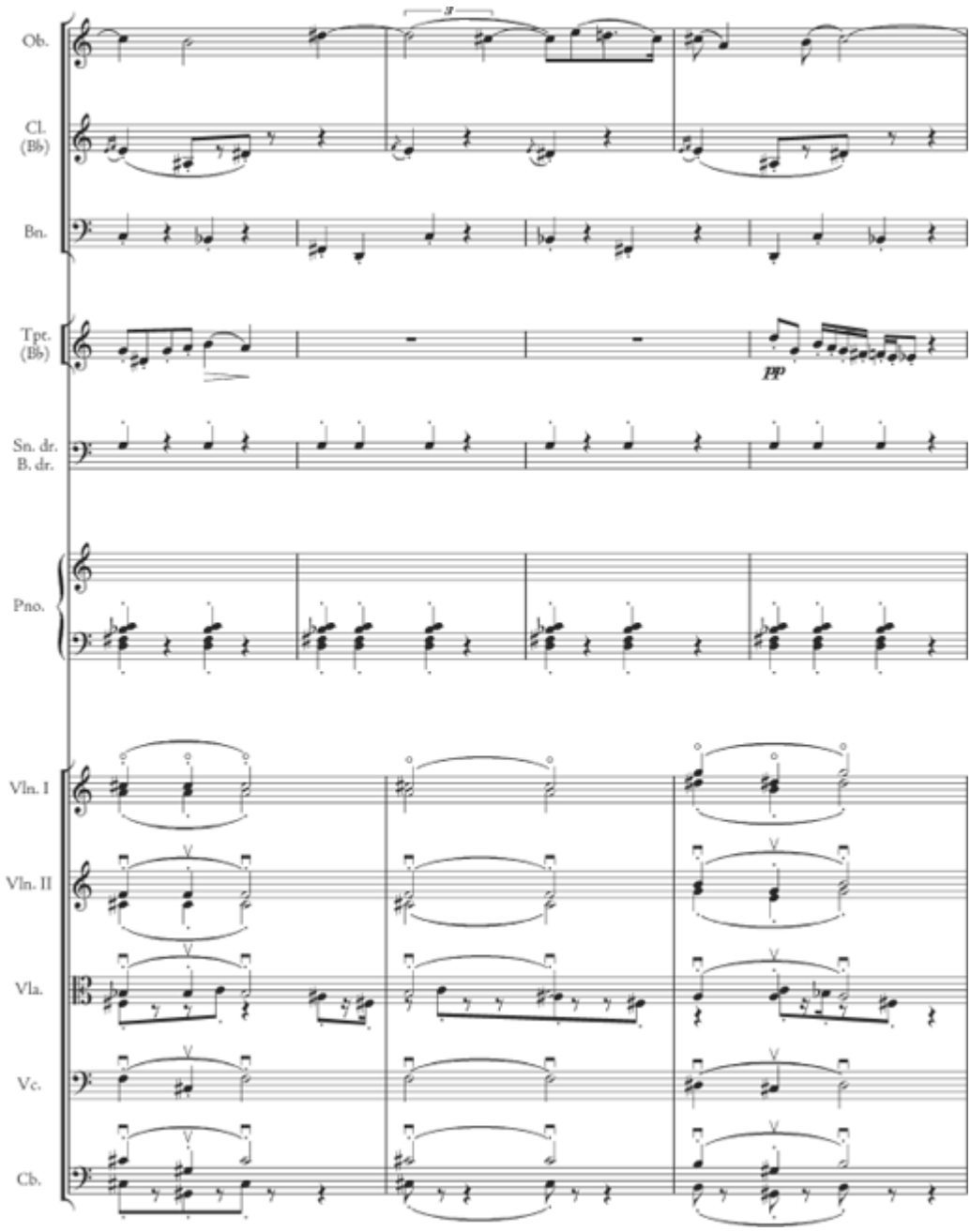

D
Fl.
Ob.
Cl. (B♭)
Bn.
Hn.
Tpt. (B♭)
Tbn. Tuba
(with Tuba ad lib.)
Sn. dr. B. dr.
Pno.
Vln. I
(non div.)
Vln. II
(non div.)
Vla.
Vc.
arco
pizz.
arco
Cb.



ex. 5-14 Charles Ives, "Putnam's Camp," (*Three Places in New England*, II), mm. 27-30 in full score.

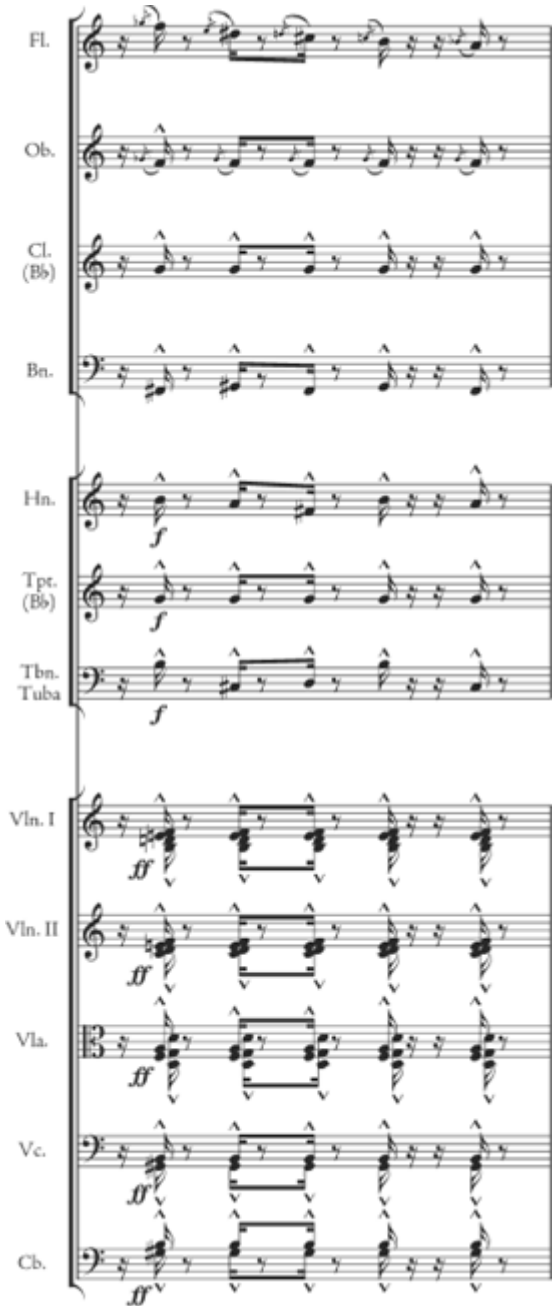
The pleadings of the "Goddess of Liberty" are set off against the threatened mutiny by pitting two groups of instruments against one another at two different tempos (Ex. 5-15). They are calibrated in a proportion of 4:3, so that a half note at the new tempo, articulated by the piano and snare drum together halfway through m. 68, equals a dotted quarter of the *Andante animato* established in m. 65. The relationship of the two speeds is made particularly clear by giving the piano and drum the same familiar parade march rhythm (known as the "street cadence") that the orchestral basses have already been playing at the old tempo, so that the effect is one of two superimposed marches.


H
Poco meno mosso (♩= about 92-88)
solo
Ob.
mf
Cl. (B♭)
p
Bn.
ppp
Tpt. (B♭)
ppp
Sn. dr.
B. dr.
pp
Pno.
ppp (as a distant drum beat)
Poco meno mosso (♩= about 92-88)
Vln. I
pp
Vln. II
p
Vla.
p
2nd Vla. pizz.
ppp
Vc.
p
unis.
Cb.
p



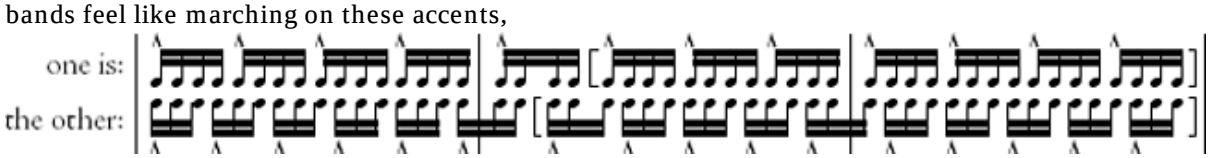
ex. 5-15 Charles Ives, "Putnam's Camp," (*Three Places in New England*, II), fig. H

Irritated by a critic's remark that the full-orchestra rhythm at m. 124 (Ex. 5-16) had been borrowed from Stravinsky (most likely the "Sacred Dance" from *The Rite of Spring*, which the notation in sixteenth notes offset by rests superficially resembles), Ives went out of his way to explain his technical procedure, somewhat elliptically, in the *Memos*. In reality, he points out, the measure simply brings back the rhythm of the faster group from the middle section (he calls it the "piano-drum part"), notated in terms of the prevailing beat—an effect that looks strange on paper, owing to the unusual subdivision of the beat, but that is easily performed:

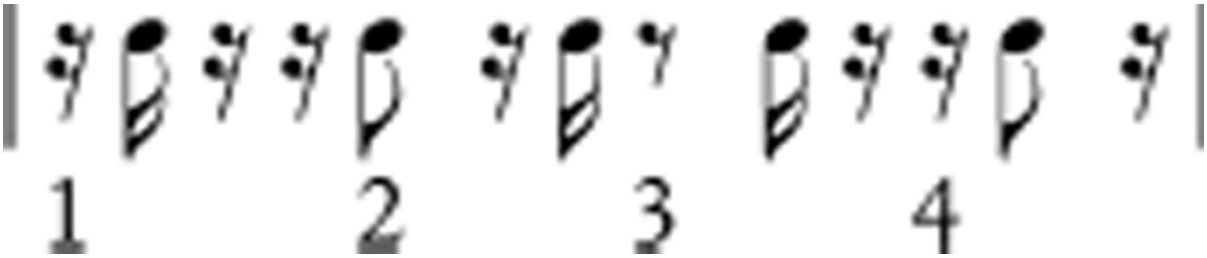


ex. 5-16 Charles Ives, "Putnam's Camp," (*Three Places in New England*, II), 2 before fig. N

The two rhythms going together (in the piano-drum part) are nothing but a beat or pulse on the first of four 16th-notes, and one on the first of three 16th-notes. Say, if a band is marching at , the next fastest marching (keeping the insert spot unit the same) will be stepping to three 16ths or , and if two bands feel like marching on these accents,



Then, for three 4/4 measures, if the top band stops playing, the second one is playing off-accents. In the third measure, it is simply:



> It will be the measure cited above [m. 124]. It doesn't take much musical intelligence to see that (or to do that, for that matter). In putting these two rhythms together, the 16th-notes don't have to be struck all the while. They will be played in various phrases, omitted in others. The more they are in, the more variants will occur, etc. I'll bet 1000 people have thought of this, perhaps played this—yet, because they don't know what it is, they say it is meaningless [when they see it], or influenced by Orcus from Australia [i.e., Stravinsky]![41]

This passage from the *Memos*, with its reference to two hypothetical bands, may have been the source of one of the most durable of all Ivesian legends. The version that follows is from *Charles Ives and His Music* (1955), by the husband-and-wife team of Henry and Sidney Cowell, the first book-length study of the composer. "The germ," the Cowells wrote,

> of Ives's complicated concept of polyphony seems to lie in an experience he had as a boy, when his father invited a neighboring band to parade with its team at a baseball game in Danbury, while at the same time the local band made its appearance in support of the Danbury team. The parade was arranged to pass along the main street as usual, but the two bands started at opposite ends of town and were assigned pieces in different meters and keys. As they approached each other the dissonances were acute, and each man played louder and louder so that his rivals would not put him off. A few players wavered, but both bands held together and got past each other successfully, the sounds of their cheerful discord fading out in the distance. Ives has reproduced this collision of musical events in several ways: From it, for example, he developed the idea of combining groups of players (sections of the orchestra) to create simultaneous masses of sound that move in different rhythms, meters, and keys. Thus his polytonality may be polyharmonic, each harmonic unit being treated like a single contrapuntal voice (as the bands played two separate tunes, each with its own harmonic setting); and it may also be polyrhythmic.[42]

Whether it originated with the composer or it was mere biographical embroidery, and despite its having been canonized by decades of repetition, this famous anecdote is pretty obviously a tall tale, concocted for the same reason that prompted Ives to assure a sympathetic critic that his radical ways "came not only from folk music he was brought up with but to a very great extent from the life 'around & in him.'"[43] For a progressive and a populist like Ives, his strange music would be unacceptably esoteric and "elite" were it not validated by his everyday experience, of which it formed a nostalgic record. It was this conviction that impelled Ives to incorporate so much of the ambient music of America—a music that included hymns and ragtime, but also Bach and Wagner—into his most maximalistic works. Life was his subject, and America was his life. Once again, obsession with technical novelty—"modernism"—had little to do with it.

And neither did "nationalism," as the term is often understood musically. Ives went out of his way to make this clear in the *Essays before a Sonata*, where he condemned the mere "stylistic" cultivation of local or vernacular color as a typical "over-influence by and over-insistence upon manner"[44] —the very bane of modern music. He reacted angrily to one H. K. Moderwell, who had written of ragtime in a magazine article that it was "the perfect expression of the American city," where "you feel in its jerk and rattle a personality different from that of any European capital," making it "the one true American music." Ives, who helped himself abundantly to both real and imitation ragtime in many of his scherzoids, countered that no music could be so described. Ragtime, he asserted, "is one of the many true, natural, and, nowadays, conventional means of expression." It had, he allowed, "its possibilities; but it does not 'represent the American nation'

any more than some fine old senators represent it."

Notes:

(36) See Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Knopf, 1955), p. 62.

(37) Jan Swafford, *Charles Ives: A Life with Music* (New York: Norton, 1996), p. 208.

(38) Ives, *Memos*, p. 61.

(39) *Essays Before a Sonata*, p. 3.

(40) Ives, *Memos*, p. 84.

(41) Ives, *Memos*, pp. 139–40.

(42) Cowell, *Charles Ives and His Music*, pp. 144–45.

(43) Draft of a letter to Paul Rosenfeld (1940); quoted in Jan Swafford, *Charles Ives: A Life with Music* (New York: Norton, 1996), p. 3.

(44) *Essays Before a Sonata*, p. 94.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online

Ives: Last works, 1918–1927

Microtone

Just intonation

REACHING—AND TRANSCENDING—THE LIMIT

Chapter: CHAPTER 5 Containing Multitudes (Transcendentalism, II)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Like most romantics in the tacitly (or passively) German tradition, Ives believed that the highest musical expression transcended all particulars, but that particulars could be an avenue toward that transcendence. The quest for universal transcendence was, for Ives, as effective a spur to stylistic maximalism as the race to the patent office was for others. So it comes as no surprise that Ives's most maximalistic conception was also his most transcendent: nothing short of a "Universe in Tones."

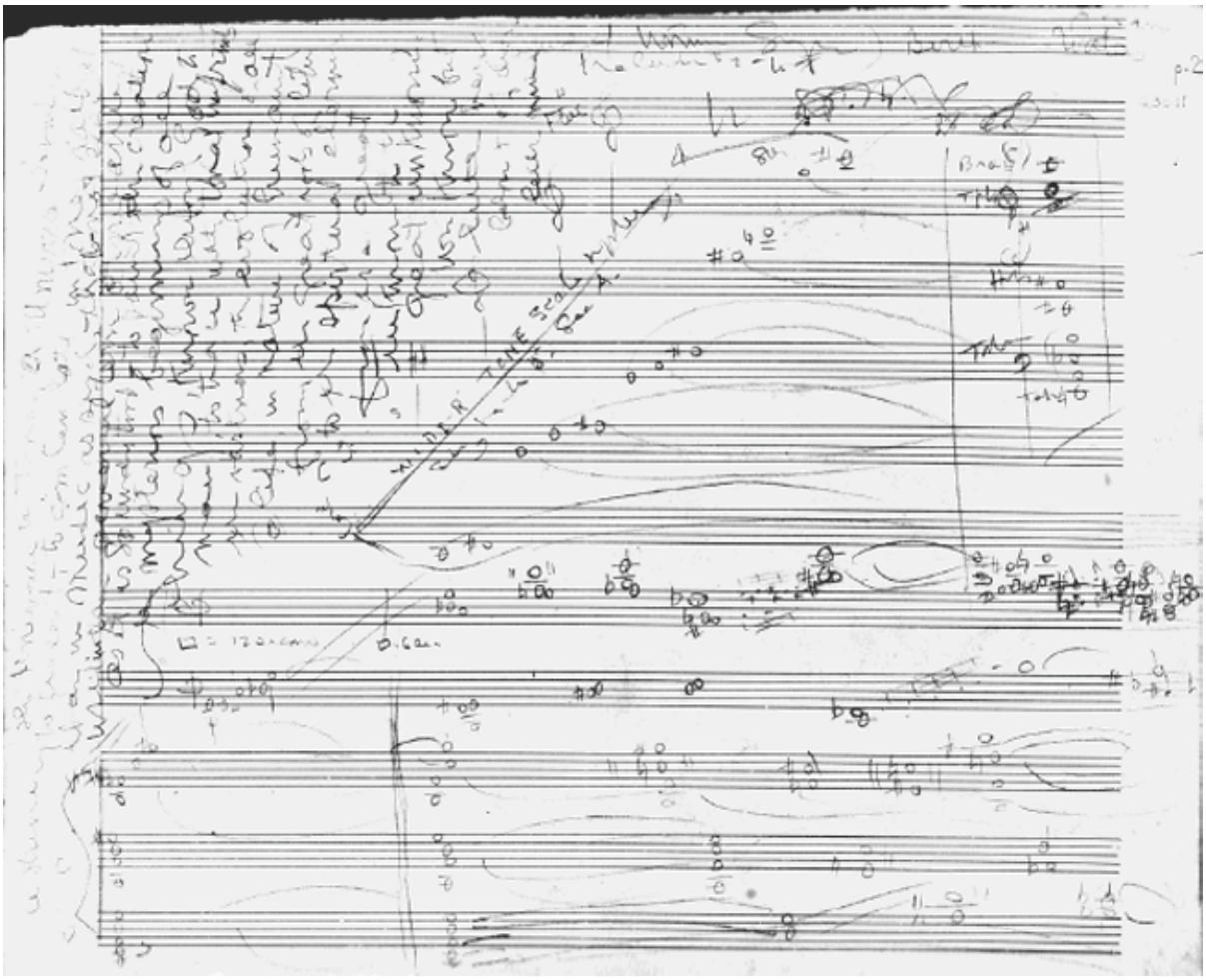


fig. 5-6 Manuscript page from Ives's *Universe* Symphony, 1911–1916.

Between 1911 and 1915, Ives accumulated sketches for a symphony with that ambitious name, inspired by the elation he had felt one autumn day while looking out over Keene Valley in the Adirondacks. It would be "a striving," as he put it in the margins of one of the sketch pages, trying desperately to capture his ineffable conception in words,

> to present and to contemplate in tones rather than in music as such, that is—not exactly written in the general term or meaning as it is so understood—to paint the creation, the mysterious beginnings of all things, known through God to man, to trace with tonal imprints the vastness, the evolution of all life, in nature of humanity, from the great roots of life to the spiritual eternities, from the great unknown to the great unknown.[45]

He never came close to finishing it. All that remained of the project at the time of his death forty years later was a sheaf of verbal descriptions, plans, jottings of chords, scales, rhythms, occasional themelets, but little clue as to continuity. Stuart Feder, Ives's psychobiographer, has suggested that the work was never meant to be completed—that its conceptual grandiosity was a compensation for the composer's waning powers of invention. In 1932, aged fifty-eight but creatively enfeebled, Ives dashed off a poignant memo in which he tried to describe the progress he had made and the work that still remained to do, so that "in case I don't get to finishing this, somebody might like to try to work out the idea, and the sketch that I've already done would make more sense to anybody looking at it with this explanation."[46]

At least two performing versions of Ives's "Universe" (or *Universe Symphony*) have been made by posthumous accomplices (Larry Austin and Johnny Reinhard, both of them composers), much as the "Prefatory Act" to Scriabin's *Mysterium*, described in the previous chapter, has been speculatively "completed" by the Russian composer Alexander Nemtin. But given the state of the materials Ives left behind, these arrangements cannot really be called completions or realizations. Ives's "Universe" is only a concept. But what a concept! According to the *Memos*, it was to be literally the Story of Everything—or, in Emersonian terms, the revelation of THE ONE. There would be three orchestras, the first consisting of nothing but percussion and representing "the pulse of the universe's life beat." The other two would divide the remaining instruments into high and low groups. And there would be three overlapping movements, to be played without pause or significant variation in tempo: "I. (Past) Formation of the waters and mountains. II. (Present) Earth, evolution in nature and humanity. III. (Future) Heaven, the rise of all to the spiritual."

This does indeed resonate with Scriabin's *Mysterium*—and with a whole antecedent line of European symphonic transcendentalism: the line of "Weltanschauungsmusik" that began with the "Representation of Chaos" at the beginning of Haydn's *Creation*, reached successive milestones with Beethoven's Ninth, Wagner's *Ring*, and Mahler's "Song of the Earth" (completed just as Ives was starting his "Universe" sketches), and culminated in the "maximal maximalism" of Scriabin, and now Ives. As if in uncanny sympathy with the Russian composer's final project (of which he could have known nothing), Ives reached tonal saturation with aggregate chords that marked, for harmonic maximalism, the end of the line.

But the uncanniness is only seeming: both Scriabin's project and Ives's were epitomes of mystical philosophies (in Ives's case Emersonian, in Scriabin's theosophical). For both of them the aggregate harmony logically symbolized "epitome" itself. Ives's aggregate chord, built up from low C in the sketch depicted in Fig. 5-6, superimposes perfect fourths and tritones—or, in other words, extends to exhaustion the process of which Stravinsky's three-note *Rite*-chord (as defined in chapter 3) was the beginning.

Since a tritone equals a perfect fourth plus a semitone, the series amounts to a circle of fourths (=fifths) alternating (or added to) a "circle of semitones" (=the chromatic scale), synthesizing the two intervallic circles that exhaust the full chromatic spectrum, producing (after Scriabin's) a second philosophy-driven saturation of musical space. Significantly enough, Ives had previously used the same all-encompassing alternation of fourths (or fifths) and tritones in the outer voices of his Psalm 24 ("The Earth is the Lord's"), possibly composed as early as 1894, to express the earth's "fullness". But what marked the unexceedable limit for Scriabin prompted a new fundamental departure in Ives, who thus showed himself to be, of the two, the more committed maximalist. It set him off in pursuit of *microtones*.

Usually, though by Ivesian standards overnarrowly, microtones are defined as pitch differences smaller than a semitone, the interval that has functioned in official music theory since the days of the Franks and their "Gregorian" chant, at the dawn of recorded musical history in the West, as the inviolable musical atom, the smallest pitch discrimination that is treated as meaningful in ordinary musical discourse. Once the twelve-tone, equal-tempered chromatic scale had become the standard, the commonest way of conceptually splitting this atom was to imagine it divided evenly by two, into "quarter tones." One of the earliest experimenters in quarter tones, Ives claimed, was none other than his father George, who (according to an unconfirmable and perhaps apocryphal account in the *Memos*) rigged up various microtonal contraptions—one of them a box of violin strings with weights attached—to overcome the limitations of arbitrary theory and "enjoy an original relation to the universe," as Emerson put it in his essay on self-reliance.

As Ives observed, we hear microtones whenever we listen to "nonmusical" sounds, for they exist in unlimited unordered profusion in the untheorized world of nature. A music that incorporated microtones would thus be, in the pantheistic transcendentalist view, a more natural and "universal" music than one circumscribed by stingy official theory. Only such a music would truly give access to the transcendental greening experience at which all of Ives's music ultimately aimed. Thus, Ives's "Universe in Tones" would of necessity unfold through a chorus of transcendentally unified microtonal tunings:

> some perfectly tuned correct scales, some well-tempered little scales, a scale of overtones with the divisions as near as determinable by acousticon [an imaginary measuring device], scales of smaller division than a semitone, scales of uneven division greater than a whole tone, scales with no octave for several octaves,[47]

as he put it in his somewhat bewildering memo of 1932. But all of these scales would be tuned to the same fundamental pitch, the A at the rock bottom of the piano keyboard, which would thus assume the holy Emersonian status of THE ONE.

Missing, of course, was any description of the technical means by which these state-of-nature scales would be produced, for such means did not exist in 1932, which is another reason to accept Feder's idea that the *Universe Symphony* was never meant to be realized in performance but rather to exist only as a work of inspiring "conceptual art." Whether he knew it or not, Ives was placing himself in a long tradition of speculative musical thought, one that might even be characterized as Western music's oldest and most distinguished maximalistic strain.

The earliest "microtonalist" in the modern history of Western art music was Nicola Vicentino (1511–ca. 1576), the Italian humanist musician who invented a keyboard instrument, the *arcigravicembalo*, with a 53-tone scale that could reproduce the pitches of the "enharmonic genus" described by various ancient Greek theorists. The purpose of the invention was to reproduce the miraculous effects of *ethos* (emotional and moral influence) that ancient Greek texts attributed to the music of the time.

Ever since the sixteenth century, there have been musicians dedicated to "just intonation"—natural tunings thought to be more capable of producing true emotional catharsis than the corrupted temperaments of modern music, which were invented to satisfy "merely musical" criteria of beauty. In the seventeenth century their ranks included the Dutch scientist and musical amateur Christiaan Huygens (1629–95), who theorized a 31-tone octave; in the eighteenth the French acoustician Joseph Sauveur (1653–1716), who published the first theoretical account of the overtone series (the harmonies of natural resonance) in 1701; and in the nineteenth the English organist Robert Holford Macdowall Bosanquet (1841–1912), who in 1875 built a harmonium tuned according to Vicentino's specifications. The leading speculative theorist along these lines in the twentieth century was Joseph Yasser (1893–1981), a Russian-American organist and scholar who proposed a division of the octave into nineteen equal intervals.

New composition according to just-intonation principles had to await the advent of twentieth-century maximalism. Just intonation's most distinctive twentieth-century exponent was Harry Partch (1901–74), a

"neohumanistic" musical dramatist whose adaptations of Greek myths were accompanied by a large instrumentarium of his own invention, tuned to a 43-interval octave. He once described himself rather acerbically as a "musician seduced into carpentry,"[48] and in so doing pinpointed the gravest problem experimenters with nonstandard tunings have always faced: that of practical hardware. Nevertheless, the just-intonation line lasted throughout the twentieth century, pursued by Eivind Groven (1901–77) in Norway, and by Ben Johnston (b. 1926) and La Monte Young (b. 1935) in the United States, among others.

The omnivorous microtonal apparatus Ives envisaged for his "Universe in Tones" seems to incorporate just-intonation components along with everything else imaginable. But in terms of practical composition, Ives belonged to the other microtonal "school," the one that split the intervals of the artificially equal-tempered chromatic scale into smaller, equally "artificial" (because equal-tempered) units. It lacked the ancient pedigree and the "greening" impulse, and can be understood only in terms of contemporary maximalism, the late-late-romantic drive to expand the expressive—or just the technical—resources at a composer's disposal.

Its pre-Ivesian history was very short. Probably the earliest experimenter in the field was Julián Carrillo (1875–1965), a Mexican composer who around 1895 began research into what he called the "sonido trece" (thirteenth sound) system, involving successive splits of the semitone into quarters, eighths, and sixteenths of a tone. His first practical compositions using the system did not appear until 1922, after he had found solutions to the many attendant problems of notation and instrument-construction.

In 1906, Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924), a very famous Italian pianist and composer living in Germany, published a pamphlet, *Entwurf einer neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, ("Sketch for a New Esthetic of Music"), in which he theorized the possibility of something really new: music based on a tripartite rather than a binary division of the tone (third-tones rather than semitones). He made no move at all toward implementation. The first composers to do so were the exact contemporaries Alois Hába (1893–1973), a Czech, and Ivan Wyschnegradsky (1893–1979), a Russian émigré living in Paris, both of whom experimented with sixth- and twelfth-tones that would permit the combination of Busoni's third tones with Carrillo's quarter tones. Like Carrillo, they began publishing their work in the 1920s.

Thus Ives's *Three Quarter-Tone Pieces* for two pianos tuned a quarter tone apart may be viewed with seemingly equal justice as Ives's ultimate nostalgic tribute to his father and to the homespun Yankee-tinker esthetic he loved to affect, or as the one time Ives was acting as a full-fledged member of the current avant-garde, contributing to what was at the time a modest high-tech vogue. Although based to some typically indeterminable extent on old sketches, the pieces were among Ives's latest. They were composed or completed in 1923–24 at the instigation of E. Robert Schmitz (1889–1949), a French-American pianist who ran a concert organization called the Franco-American Musical Society, which sponsored a New York performance of the second and third pieces in February 1925. Except for a single performance of a violin sonata the year before, this was Ives's first noteworthy public hearing since *The Celestial Country* in 1902.

Notes:

(45) Quoted in Feder, *Charles Ives: "My Father's Song,"* p. 294.

(46) Ives, *Memos*, p. 108.

(47) Ives, *Memos*, p. 107.

(48) Harry Partch, Introduction to *Photographs of Instruments Built by Harry Partch and Heard in His Recorded Music* (Champaign, Ill.: Gate 5, 1962), n.p.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online

Charles Ives

Hermann von Helmholtz

Quarter-tone

ACCEPTING BOUNDARIES

Chapter: CHAPTER 5 Containing Multitudes (Transcendentalism, II)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

And yet these pieces, while technically (or at least technologically) "advanced," were not composed in anything like an avant-garde spirit. Nowhere is there the sense, manifest in both the writings and the compositions of Hába or Carrillo, of reinventing music theory and performing practice from the ground up. There is no impulse to cast out the common practice or to replace it. Rather, there is a sense, in the outer movements, of expressively extending the common practice, and, in the "scherzoid" middle movement, of parodying it.

While Ives's solution to the hardware problem was eminently practical in that (unlike the work of all the composers named in the foregoing background sketch) it did not require the invention of any new instruments, there was one utopian feature that has been modified whenever the pieces have been publicly performed. The score presupposes that the first piano is tuned a quarter-tone sharp. Since no reputable piano tuner will agree to put so much extra stress on the instrument's mechanism, in practice the second piano is tuned flat.

As to the esthetic or perceptual problems that attend the use of microtones, there is not only the evidence of the score, but also an article that Ives wrote for Schmitz's house organ, the *Franco-American Music Society Bulletin* in the issue of 25 March 1925, which appeared shortly after the partial premiere of his pieces. In it, Ives starts right out by disavowing the sort of radical individualism associated with modernism, in favor of a socially mediated or "communitarian" esthetic that was more in keeping with New England idealist thinking associated not only with Emerson but also with Wendell Phillips (1811–84), a leading Bostonian abolitionist and social reformer whom Ives quotes. "To go to extremes in anything," Ives wrote with pointed irony,

> is an old-fashioned habit growing more and more useless as more and more premises of truth come before man, though to hold that music is built on unmovable, definitely known laws of tone which rule so as to limit music in all of its manifestations is better—but not much—than brushing everything aside except ecstatic ebullitions and a cigarette. Instead, why not go with Wendell Phillips (who won't join a radical party or a conservative one) and assume that "everybody knows more than anybody."[49]

Next Ives cites the standard treatise on acoustics (*On the Sensations of Tone* [*Die Lehre von den Tonempfindungen*], 1877) by Hermann Ludwig Ferdinand von Helmholtz (1821–94), in which the great German physicist tried to give equal recognition to both the physical (natural) and social sources of musical theory and practice: "*The system of scales, modes, and harmonic tissues*," Ives quotes (italicizing every word for emphasis),

> *does not rest solely upon unalterable natural laws, but is at least partly also the result of aesthetical principles, which have already changed, and will still further change, with the progressive development of humanity*.

The prospect facing all who would enlarge the practice of music along microtonal lines, Ives implies, is to find a truly meaningful basis for it that neither claims the spurious authority of nature nor relies wholly on the spirit of arbitrary arrogant innovation, but that seeks to forge a new consensus between composer and listener.

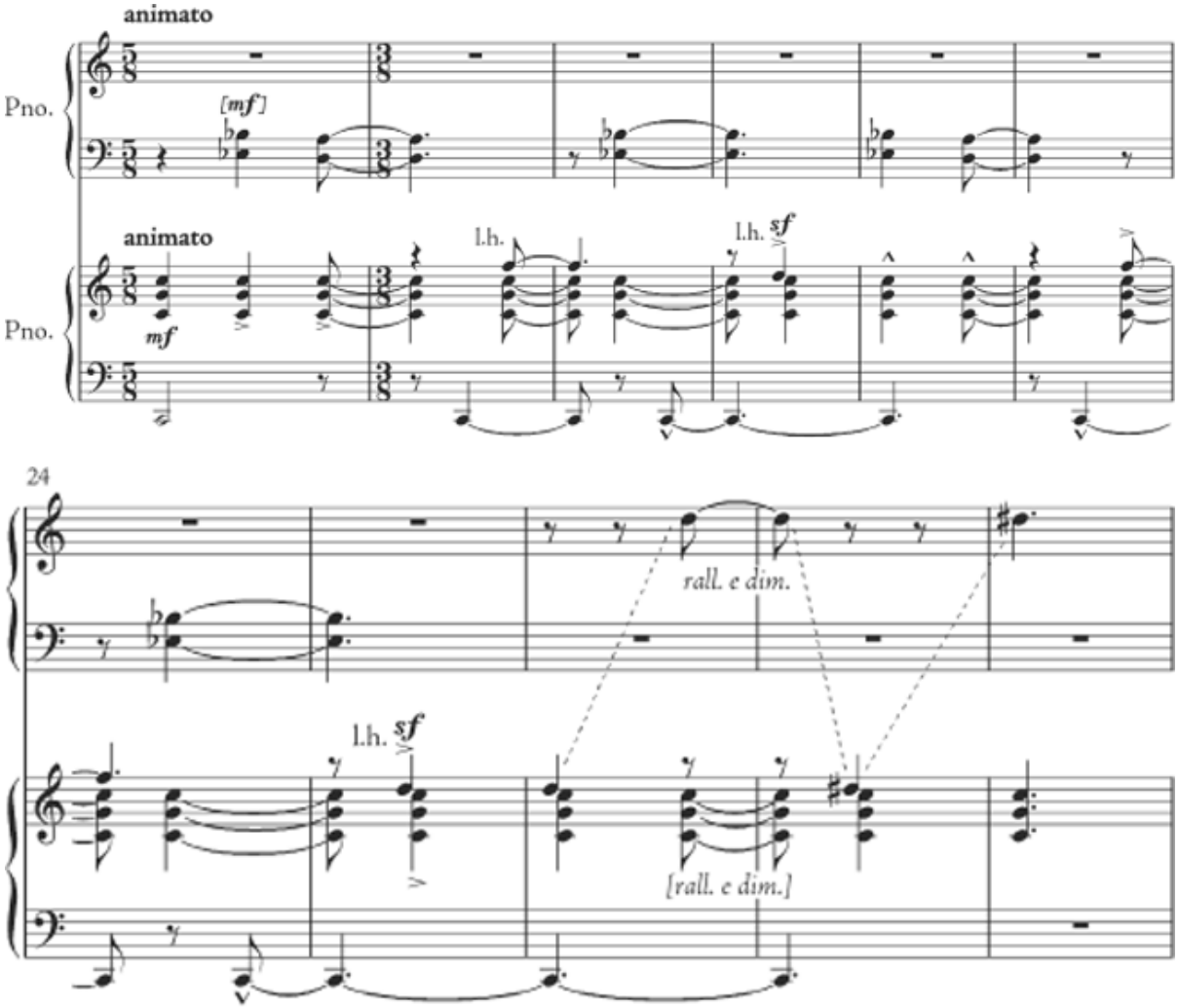
The task, then, is "the assimilation of quarter-tones with what we have now."[50] The method Ives proposes is one he claims to have adopted from his father, who "after working for some time became sure that some quarter-tone chords must be learned before quarter-tone melodies would make much sense and become natural to the ear, and so for the voice." There follows the only technical discussion of Ivesian harmony the composer ever furnished; and inasmuch as it is corroborated by the score, it is worth quoting as a gauge of his intentions.

> Chords of four or more notes, as I hear it, seem to be a more natural basis than triads. A triad using quarter-tones, it seems to me, leans toward the sound or sounds that the diatonic ear expects after hearing the notes which must form some diatonic interval, say the fifth C-G. Thus the third note, a tone halfway between E and D sharp, enters as a kind of weak compromise to the sound expected—in other words, a chord out of tune. While if another note is added which will make a quarter-tone interval with either of the two notes, C–G, which make the diatonic interval, we have a balanced chord which, if listened to without prejudice, leans neither way, and which seems to establish an identity of its own.[51]

After acknowledging the necessity of retaining perfect octaves and fifths even in quarter-tone music (for they are "such unrelenting masters in the realm of the physical nature of sounds"), Ives proceeds to some practical examples. Imagining a piano with two keyboards, like a harpsichord, in which the upper one is tuned a quarter tone sharp, Ives starts out with the "out of tune triad" he had considered and rejected as a basis, and then suggests the addition of an "upper" A sharp. "If listened to several times in succession," the resulting chord

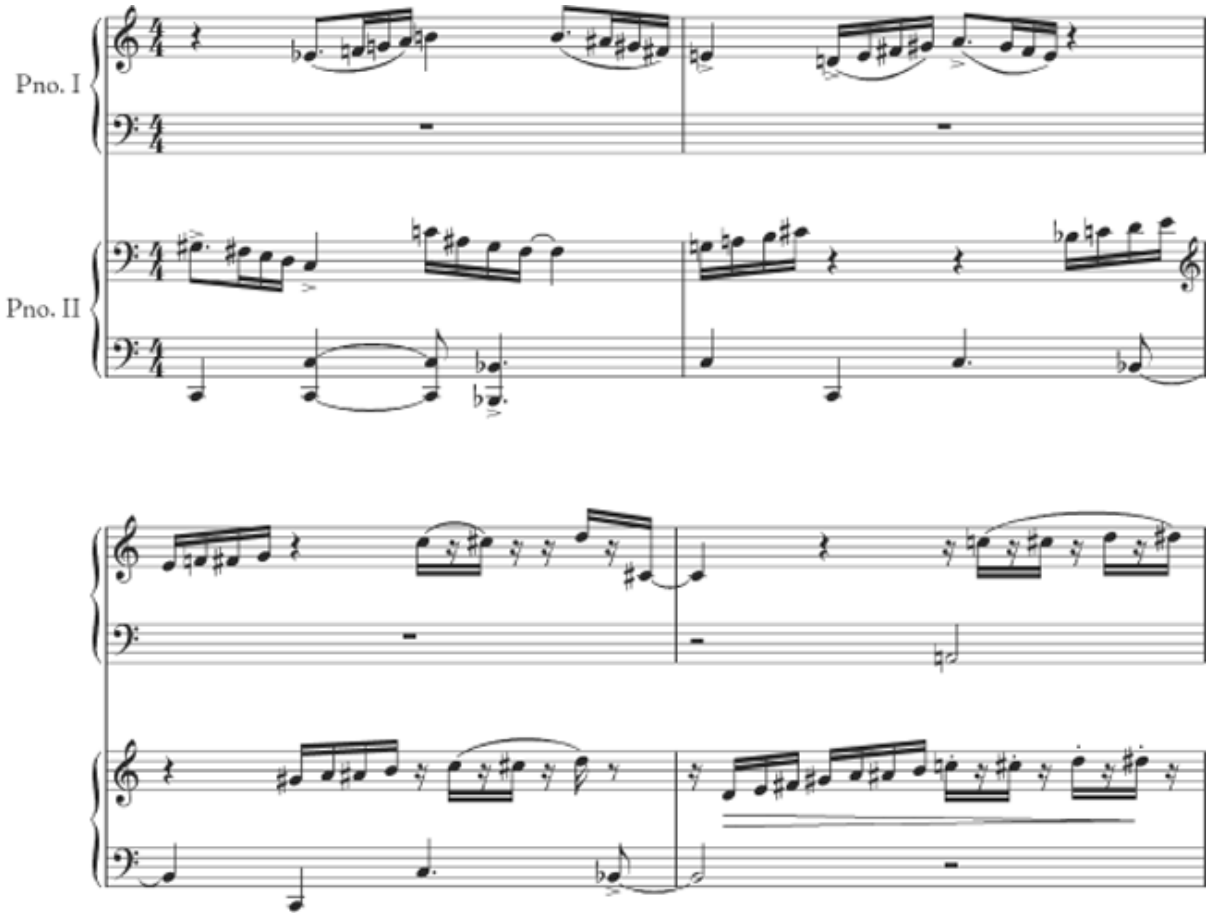
> gathers a kind of character of its own—neither major, minor, nor even diminished. A chord of these intervals, it seems to me, may form a satisfactory and reasonable basis for a fundamental chord. It has two perfect fifths, three major thirds a quarter-tone flat, with an augmented second a quarter-tone flat completing the octave. It gives a feeling of finality and supports reasonably well a simple quartertone melody. By quarter-tone melody I mean a succession of notes fairly evenly divided between notes in both pianos or keyboards. If the diatonic notes [that is, the normally-tuned ones on the lower keyboard] are taken as a general basis for a melody, using the quarter-tones only as passing notes, suspensions, etc., the result is not difficult for the ear to get.

The chord just described, together with the kind of melody that is proposed (or supposed) to go with it, make up the basic or "normative" material of the first of Ives's *Three Pieces*. It first appears in m. 18 (Ex. 5-17a), exactly as Ives described it in his article (except that the sharps have been respelled as flats). This primary quarter-tone consonance retains the perfect intervals of conventional tonal practice, and substitutes for the imperfect consonances tones that exactly split the difference between their major and minor variants. The way the E♭–B♭ fifth in the first piano alternates with a D–A fifth suggests, moreover, that Ives was seeking within the quarter-tone domain for an equivalent to the major-minor opposition: an alternation between thirds and sevenths a quarter tone greater than minor ones and thirds and sevenths a quarter tone less. The dotted lines connecting notes between the parts in mm. 26–28 identify the notes in piano I as "using the quartertones as passing notes," according to the prescription for intelligibility formulated in the article.

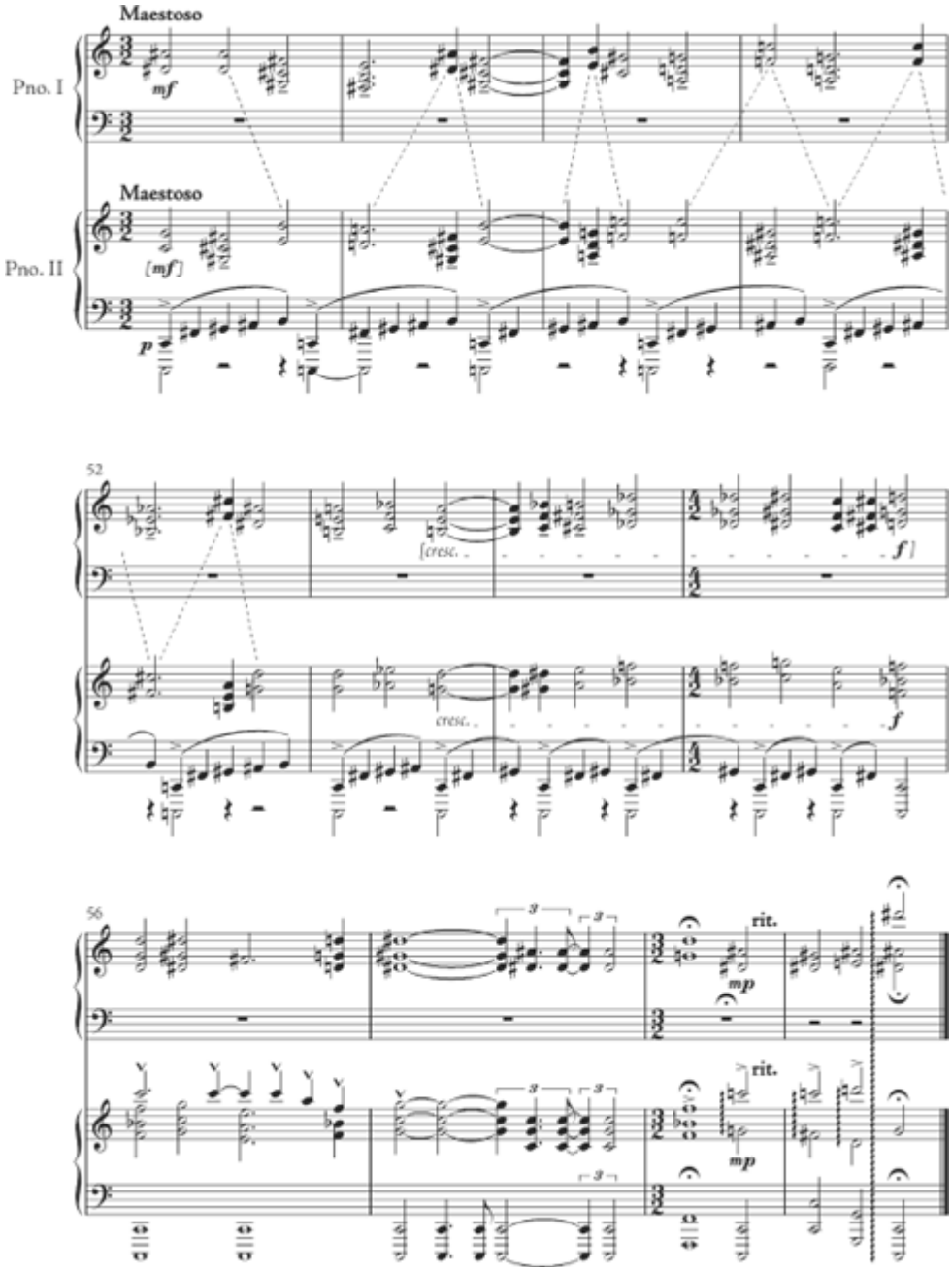


ex. 5-17a Charles Ives, *Three Quarter-Tone Pieces*, first piece, mm. 18-28

The second movement is despite the unusual circumstances a typically nostalgic scherzoid replete with hymn-tune reminiscences (“Bringing in the Sheaves” among others), but more consistently in ragtime style, the quarter tones here parodying the sort of piano—in bars or “houses of ill repute”—on which ragtime was often, if not usually, played. The “normative consonance” makes a triumphant appearance to harmonize what sounds like a snatch from “The Battle Cry of Freedom.” The funny (or fun-filled) aspect of the piece extends to its inordinate difficulty of execution, the pianists being required to execute quick “chromatic” runs of quarter tones that amount in practice to almost impracticably rapid hockets (Ex. 5-17b).



ex. 5-17b Charles Ives, *Three Quarter-Tone Pieces*, second piece, mm. 53-56

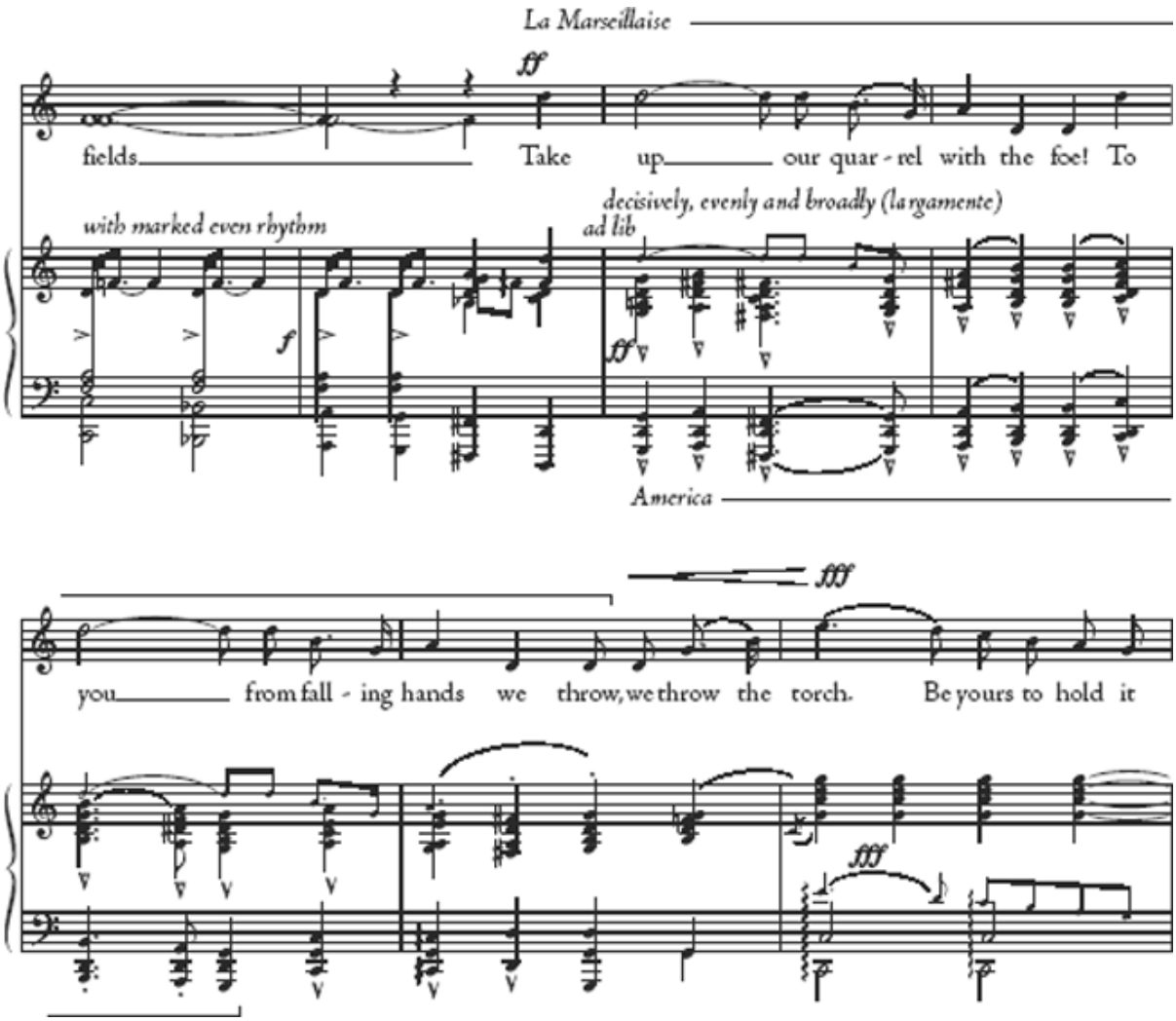


ex. 5-17c Charles Ives, *Three Quarter-Tone Pieces*, third piece, end

According to the *Memos*, the third piece was a reworking of an old quarter-tone "chorale" for strings that the composer variously dated 1903–1914 or 1913–1914 in different work lists. The earlier dating may have been one of those backdated bids for patent-office priority that have bedeviled Ives scholarship, for there is good internal evidence that the piece was written at least during, and probably after, the Great War. The chorale as such occupies only the first three systems, and consists mainly of showing ways in which the "normative consonance" (this time spelled the way it is described in the *Memos*) may be quitted and approached with smooth quarter-tone voice leading. The final phrase experiments with the application of a dominant to the quarter-tone tonic, but it is not clear how seriously: the effect may be read as a parody of wheezy church harmoniums to complement the preceding barroom piano.

Beginning in m. 16, chorale gives way to passacaglia over a quarter-tone adaptation of the ancient *passus duriusculus*, or chromatic descent from the tonic to the lower fifth. What will prove to be the main theme of the piece begins hazily to emerge in triplets. The final page (Ex. 5-17c) is peroration: the theme returns in

quarter tones, signaled by the dotted lines connecting the melody notes; at the pickup to m. 53 the theme begins again, now confined to the second piano and proceeding in semitones, only to begin yet again at the pickup to m. 55 in its original diatonic form, by which time all listeners will presumably have recognized it as "America" ("My country, 'tis of thee"). At the culminating point (m. 56), the American hymn is trumped by the climactic line ("Aux armes, citoyens!") from "La Marseillaise", the French national anthem. The linkage of the two may have been no more than a graceful nod to Schmitz's Franco-American Music Society. But the effect is serious, even moving, and the intended significance may have been greater. The same juxtaposition of national hymns is found at the climax of one of Ives's most fervent songs, an April 1917 setting of John McCrae's famous poem "In Flanders Fields," a tribute to the Allied war dead—not a subject about which Ives was inclined to joke (Ex. 5-18). The ending of the Third Quarter-Tone Piece may have been intended, and can certainly be read, as a transcendental moment to transform (and perhaps embarrass) the irreverent humor that preceded it—another instance of timeless elevated substance channeled or transmuted through a new manner.



ex. 5-18 Charles Ives, *In Flanders Fields*, end

The visionary aspect of Ives's maximalism is the crucial one. It both impelled his radicalism and limited it, lest manner impede substance. Conceived as a medium of vital transcendental communication, Ives's maximalism sought maximum compromise with the common practice—or rather, with the expectable expectations of listeners. He sought extension, rather than replacement, of the commonly accepted norms and aims of music, and his utopianism was tempered by acceptance of natural constraints, whether "physical" or "human."

Ives appealed to physical nature when, imagining a possible "fundamental chord" consisting of C and E on his lower keyboard vs. G and A♯B♭ on the upper, he finally rejected it on acoustical grounds: It "has no fifth—that inexorable thing—a part of the natural laws which apparently no aesthetic principle has yet beaten out."[52] The best Ives could offer on behalf of such a chord was the hope that "some day, perhaps, an Edison, a Dempsey, or an Einstein will or will not suppress [the supremacy of the fifth] with a blow from a new natural law." But, he implies, that day is not today.

As to human nature, he appeals both to "natural" conservatism and to what a European would probably call typically American pragmatism when he comments that, "quarter-tones or no quarter-tones, why tonality as such should be thrown out for good I can't see," although, he is quick to add, "why it should be always present, I can't see."[53] The matter is to be adjudicated not by appeals to history or trips to the patent office, but "on what one is trying to do, and on the state of mind, the time of day or other accidents of life."

Ironically enough, Ives's caution—or his emphasis on the easily apprehended "substance" of the music rather than on its peculiar manner—actually stood in the way of reception at the 1925 premiere. Olin Downes, then just starting what would be a thirty-year tenure as chief music critic of the *New York Times*, dismissed the quarter-tone pieces by "Charles St. Ives" (as he carelessly transcribed the name from his program) as "having been thought in the customary tonal and semi-tonal [?] medium," so that "the result was simply that the music sounded a good deal out of tune."[54] The critic claimed to be receptive to microtonality, but only provided the music "had a quality far more native to small divisions of tones than those heard last night."

Notes:

(49) Ives, "Some Quarter-Tone Impressions," *Essays Before a Sonata and Other Writings*, p. 108.

(50) *Ibid*., p. 109.

(51) *Ibid*., pp. 111–12.

(52) *Ibid*., p. 113.

(53) *Ibid*., p. 117.

(54) *New York Times*, 15 February 1925; rpt. J. Peter Burkholder, ed., *Charles Ives and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 293.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Julián Carrillo

Modernism

MORE PATENT-OFFICE MODERNISM

Chapter: CHAPTER 5 Containing Multitudes (Transcendentalism, II)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Such a music was Julián Carrillo's. Compared with Ives's apparent caution, his stance with regard to microtonality was uncompromising indeed. It required an enormous investment in hardware, a new system of notation, and the pitiless sacrifice of the common practice toward which Ives showed such solicitude. It was the stance of true modernism, against which Ives's more moderate posture can be viewed in relief.

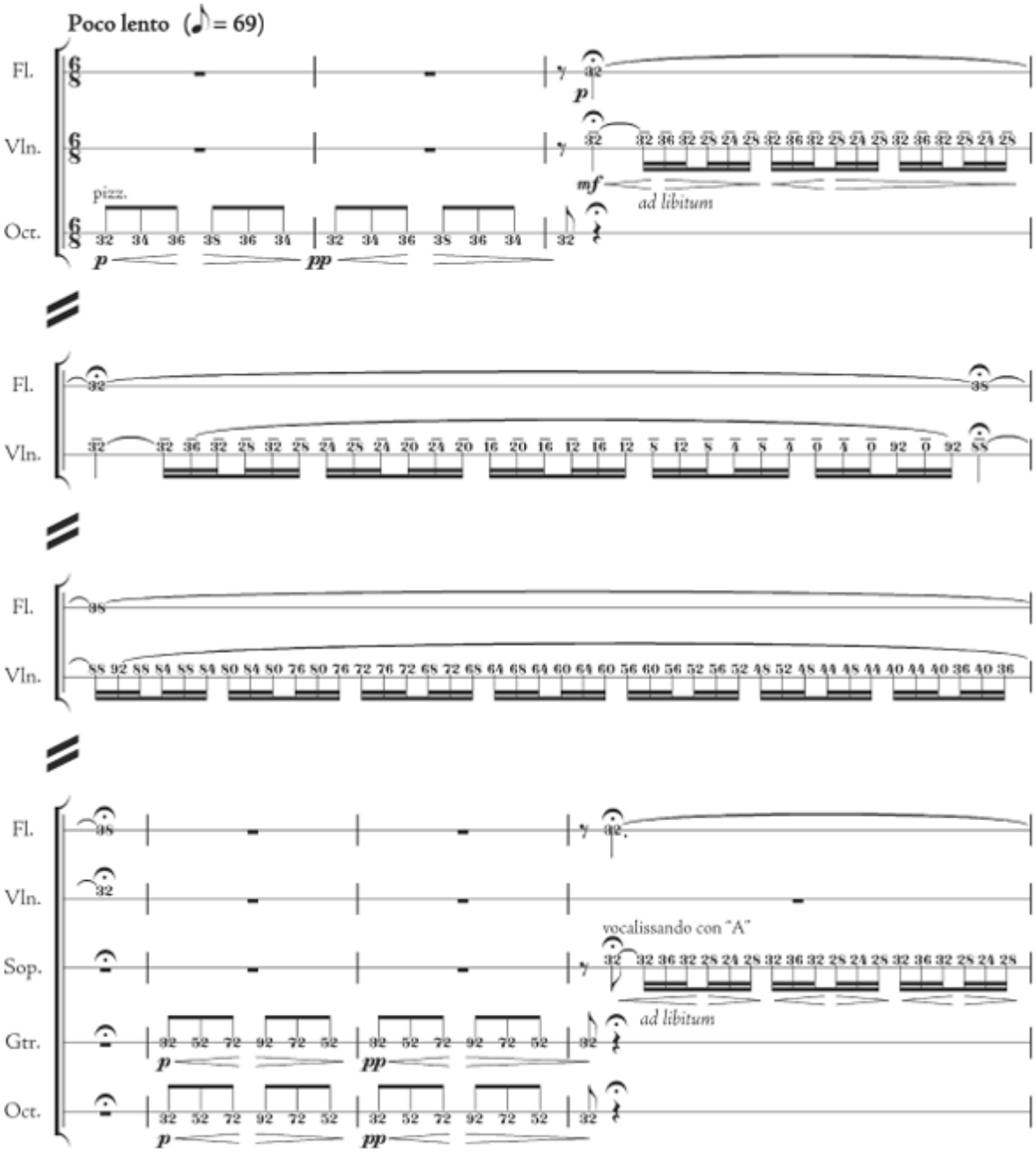
Carrillo's best known composition is the *Preludio a Colón* ("Prelude to Columbus"). It was composed in 1922, published (in 1944) in Henry Cowell's *New Music Quarterly*, which had already served as showcase for Ives's most radical music, and was even recorded in the 1940s by an ensemble called the Ensemble of the 13th Tone in Havana. It is scored for a chamber sextet consisting of a flute that has been adapted to produce quarter tones; a violin that (or rather a violinist who) is asked to play in quarter tones; a soprano who is asked to sing them (wordlessly); a harp that mainly plays pedal glissandos, some of them microtonal; a guitar with frets adapted to produce quarter tones; and an *octavina* (or *guitarrón*), a large bass guitar mainly used in Mexican urban popular music (*mariachi*) ensembles, with a long fingerboard fitted with frets that can produce eighth tones.

The very first sentence of Carrillo's preface to the published score proclaims his music's claim to fame: "This 'Preludio a Colón' is the first composition in the world written in 16th tones." He proceeds immediately to an explanation of the notation, which substitutes numbers for the conventional notes on a staff, since the latter cannot show intervals smaller than the semitone (and is in any case designed with diatonic modes in mind). By letting zero equal C and dividing the tone by sixteen, it is possible to fix any pitch down to the sixteenth part of a tone. If C is zero, then D is 16 (0 + 16), and E (the tonic pitch of the *Preludio*) is 32 (0 + 16 + 16). Continuing by whole tones, F♯ will be 48 (32 + 16), F natural will be 40 (32 + 8 or 48 − 8), the quarter tone between E and F will be 36 (32 + 4 or 40 − 4), and the eighth tones on either side of the quarter tone will be 34 and 38. In other words, increments of 2 represent eighth tones, increments of 4 represent quarter tones, and so on. (Although the proud first sentence advertises sixteenth tones, they are apparently only theoretically available; pitch increments by 1 do not occur in the score.)

Why do the musical results seem so trivial? One could answer, Ivesianly, that the manner has utterly swamped the substance; but that presumptuously presupposes knowledge of the purported substance. Or one might notice how often the melodic lines are confined to ascending and descending scales and arpeggios. Having replaced a familiar musical idiom with an exotic one, avoiding compromise with common practice yet (apparently) unwilling to impose any arbitrary constraint on the novel material, the composer (evidently) contents himself with displaying its properties, affording the audience what amounts to an extended ear-training session.

Thus the piece opens (Ex. 5-19) with the octavina demonstrating a scale of eighth tones that (it seems) deliberately falls one-eighth short of a semitone, then proceeds to a demonstration by the violin of descending scale of quarter tones decorated with neighbors. Next, the guitar and octavina demonstrate an ascending and descending scale (or is it an arpeggio?) that proceeds by increments of 20, producing intervals of tone. Much later in the piece (16 measures from the end), the same pair of instruments performs a scale

that proceeds by increments of 12, producing intervals of tone. This would seem to have interesting possibilities, since the interval in question is half of a minor third, which is half of a tritone, which is half of an octave. The resulting scale, which divides the octave into eight equal intervals, might be described as "equal-tempered octatonic," a term that resonates with a lot of the French and Russian music written over the preceding several decades.



ex. 5-19 Julián Carrillo, *Preludio a Colón*

Nothing is done with it, however, except to repeat it a few bars later with doublings at the major and minor third. Seven bars before the end, the flute and guitar play scales in contrary motion that alternate increments of 20 and 12; that is, they proceed by alternating the two unusual intervals (tone and tone) within an unequally divided major third. Carrillo seems to be feeling his way toward a new harmonic idiom, and taking his listeners with him step by step. But the composition as such, like a great deal of modernist or maximalist music that lacks (or shuns) a clear imaginal or expressive content, seems to devolve into a technical exercise, of interest only to the extent that the hearer is interested in the technique being exercised.

The situation obviously recalls Ortega y Gasset's description, quoted in chapter 2, of modernist art as "art for artists." One wonders whether the composer would have regarded as valid the benevolently intended reaction of one critic, reviewing the recording of the piece, who praised it not as a composition but as a collection of "weird and intriguing sounds, not unlike those one hears from insect life in a field on a hot summer afternoon."[55] One suspects, rather, that the composer would have regarded as valid only a critique of his music that addressed its technical premises. It would be difficult to imagine an attitude toward musical innovation further removed from that of Ives. But if Carrillo's *Preludio a Colón* is the first unequivocal instance of Ortega's "art for artists" that we have encountered, it will surely not be the last.

Notes:

(55) David Hall, *The Record Book: International Edition* (New York: Oliver Durrell, Inc., 1948), p. 439.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online

Henry Cowell

Ruth Crawford Seeger

Carl Ruggles

Leo Ornstein

TRANSCENDENTALISM VS. FUTURISM

Chapter: CHAPTER 5 Containing Multitudes (Transcendentalism, II)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Partly in connection with Henry Cowell and his *New Music Quarterly*, a recognizable school of American maximalists or "ultramoderns"—Carl Ruggles (1876–1971), Wallingford Riegger (1885–1961), John J. Becker (1886–1961), Dane Rudhyar (1895–1985), Ruth Crawford (or Ruth Crawford Seeger, 1901–1953), and Cowell himself—briefly came into view, seemingly ranged around Ives. If Ives seemed to dominate the group in terms of publications, it was partly because he was bankrolling the venture with his business fortune and Cowell was showing his gratitude. Nevertheless, the school was a coherent one. Its members shared both a technical orientation and an expressive purpose, which like Ives's own may be jointly summed up as transcendental maximalism. All, that is, employed radical means toward spiritual ends.

fig. 5-7a Ruth Crawford Seeger (photograph by Fernand de Gueldre).

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WILLIAM GRANT STILL
ADOLPH WEISS

PRESENTS A CONCERT OF WORKS BY COMPOSERS OF
MEXICO, CUBA AND UNITED STATES
CARNEGIE CHAMBER HALL
MONDAY EVENING, APRIL 21ST, 1930
AT EIGHT-THIRTY O'CLOCK

SOLOISTS: RADIANA PAZMOR, CONTRALTO; IMRE WEISSHAUS, Composer-Pianist; D. DESARNO, Oboeist; HARRY FREISTADT, Trumpeter; STEPHANIE SCHEHATOWITSCH, Pianist; JEROME GOLDSTEIN, Violinist.

PROGRAM

I.

SONATINA FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO — CARLOS CHAVEZ
SOLO FOR VIOLIN — HENRY COWELL
Mr. Goldstein and Mr. Weisshaus

II.

SUITE FOR PIANO — IMRE WEISSHAUS
In Three Movements
The Composer

III.

SOLO FOR OBOE — VIVIAN FINE
Mr. Desarno

THE NEW RIVER
THE INDIANS
ANN STREET
(For Trumpet and Piano) — CHARLES IVES
Mr. Freistadt and Mr. Weisshaus

INTERMISSION

IV.

SIX PIECES FOR SOLO VOICE — IMRE WEISSHAUS
TWO AFRO CUBAN SONGS — ALEJANDRO CATURLA
Miss Pazmor and Mr. Weisshaus

V.

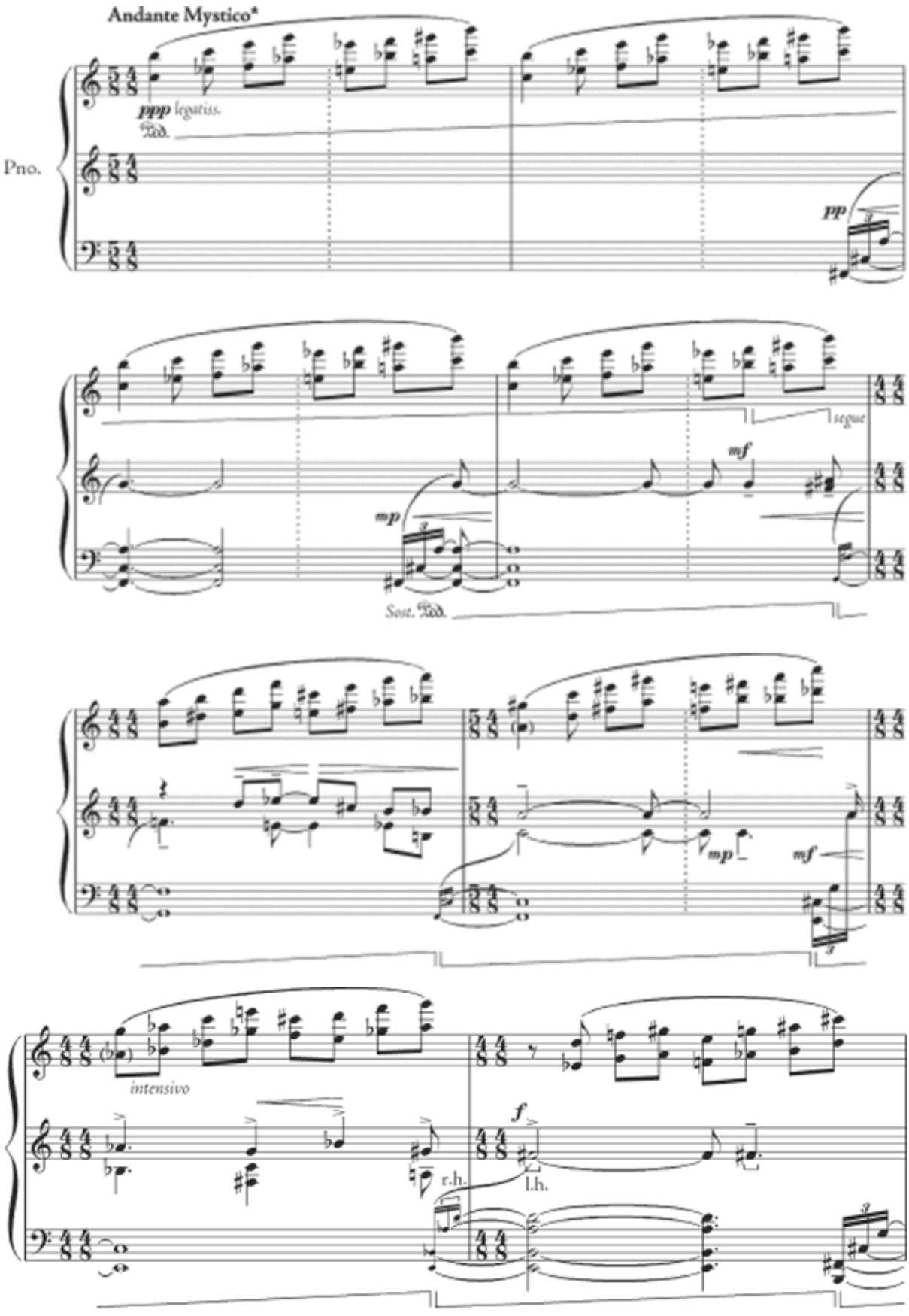
TWO "MOMENTS" — D. RUDHYAR
TWO PIECES FOR PIANO — GERALD STRANG
TWO SARABANDES — HENRY BRANT
PRELUDE — ADOLPH WEISS
SECOND PIANO SONATE — GEORGE ANTHEIL
Mr. Weisshaus

VI.

"RAT RIDDLES" (For Voice, Oboe, Piano and Percussion) — RUTH CRAWFORD
Miss Pazmor, Miss Scheiatowitsch, Mr. Desarno and Mr. Weisshaus

fig. 5-7b Program for a concert of the Pan American Association of Composers, 21 April 1930.

Two of the group, Rudhyar and Crawford, were like Scriabin drawn to theosophy, and used their music to convey its occult concepts. Rudhyar (or Daniel Chennevière, as he was known in his native France before he emigrated to America in 1916), was a practicing astrologer. Crawford, the piano pupil of Djane Lavoie Herz (1888–1982), a Scriabin disciple who had known the Russian composer in Brussels at the height of his involvement with theosophy, was described at the beginning of her career as a member of "the Rudhyar-Scriabine faction."[56] In 1928 Cowell published a set of preludes by Crawford in the *New Music Quarterly*. The sixth, composed in 1927, is marked *Andante mystico* and dedicated "with deep love and gratitude to Djane, my inspiration." The impulse to aggregate-completion, the ever-present sign of spiritualist maximalism, is especially clear in this piece: the two-measure right-hand ostinato presents nine (out of twelve) pitch classes, and the root and fifth of the F♯ minor triad arpeggiated in the left hand supply the tenth and eleventh tones. The remaining pitch class, D, is saved for the ninth measure, when the bass note shifts to G, to provide the crowning touch (Ex. 5-20).



*Accidentals affect only individual notes before which they occur.

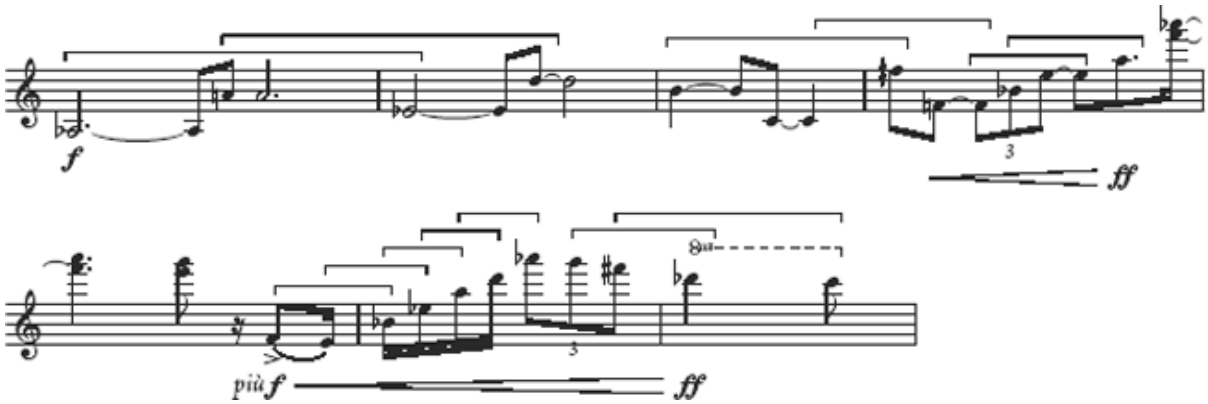
ex. 5-20 Ruth Crawford, Prelude no. 6 (Andante mystico), beginning

The unusual pedaling, deploying all three pedals so that the sostenuto pedal sustains the sound whenever the damper pedal is cleared, insures that the twelve-tone aggregate, or something close to it, is maintained as a resonance throughout. This effort to sustain the aggregate sonority apparently follows a precept of Rudhyar's that finally makes explicit what we have long observed to be an implicit maximalist principle linking musical practice with the transcendentalist or theosophical conception of "the ONE." This link is precisely what Rudhyar intends by the strange term "syntonistic," when writing that

> whereas in the classical tonal music, each distinct harmony had to keep its resonance separate, in this "syntonistic" music there is in theory but one harmony, that of the whole body of Sound or of Nature, and therefore chords must be made usually to blend their resonances.[57]

Although she never experimented with microtonality as a composer, some of Crawford's letters describe her enthusiasm on hearing Carrillo's work, which she found "very fascinating and moving," and (possibly owing to her theosophical predilections) likened to something "extremely oriental, Hindu in effect."[58]

Ruggles also made aggregate-completion an explicit basis of his composing practice. The best-known example is the opening theme from the orchestral fantasia *Sun-treader*, published by Cowell in 1934, Ruggles's largest work (its astrally elated title borrowed, like much in Ives, from the poetry of Robert Browning). The theme (Ex. 5-21) consists of two widely arching phrases separated by a sixteenth rest. The first presents all the pitch classes except C♯D♭ (with the opening A♭–A climactically repeated in reverse), and the second presents all but B, with D♭, the pitch withheld from the first phrase, now forming the very pinnacle of the melodic arc. The brackets display the many embeddings (or "imbrications," to use current music-theory language) of the tritone-plus-fourth motif we have already noted several times as endemic to maximalistic music in many countries. Like Ives in the *Universe* (and Stravinsky in *The Rite*, as well as several other composers we will be meeting shortly), Ruggles used it as a basic constructive element.



ex. 5-21 Carl Ruggles, *Sun-treader*, opening theme

As for Cowell himself, his earliest (and most radical) music was written for performance at the Temple of the People, a theosophical colony, which the young composer joined in 1916, located in Halcyon, a California coastal town somewhat to the north of Santa Barbara. The community patriarch, John Varian, installed a giant harp in his home to represent the mythical harp of life on which the Celtic gods had played. The notion of that cosmic music, and the Irish myths that Varian retold in his poems, inspired in Cowell, the precocious son of an Irish immigrant, the work that made his early fame.

Cowell took a more direct approach to aggregates, producing them by laying palms, fists, and forearms on the piano keyboard. The results, called "elbow music"[59] by detractors, and "concordances of many close-lying notes" or "secundal harmonies" by their more pretentious admirers, became celebrated as "tone clusters," the term Cowell devised for them in 1921. The playing technique as such, which Cowell probably discovered the way countless other children discover it, went perhaps a decade further back. Cowell notated it for the first time in *Adventures in Harmony*, a "novelette" for piano written (or written down) in 1913, when the

composer was fifteen or sixteen, at the request of his piano teacher, who was a devoted member of the Halcyon temple.

fig. 5-8 Henry Cowell.

The first piece Cowell composed after he joined the temple himself was *The Tides of Manaunaun*, first played in the summer of 1917 as part of the music to accompany a Halcyon pageant called *The Building of Banba*, a dramatization of the Irish creation myth. The "story according to John Varian," printed above the music when it was published in 1922, recounts that

> Manaunaun was the god of motion, and long before the creation, he sent forth tremendous tides, which swept to and fro through the universe, and rhythmically moved the particles and materials of which the gods were later to make the suns and worlds.

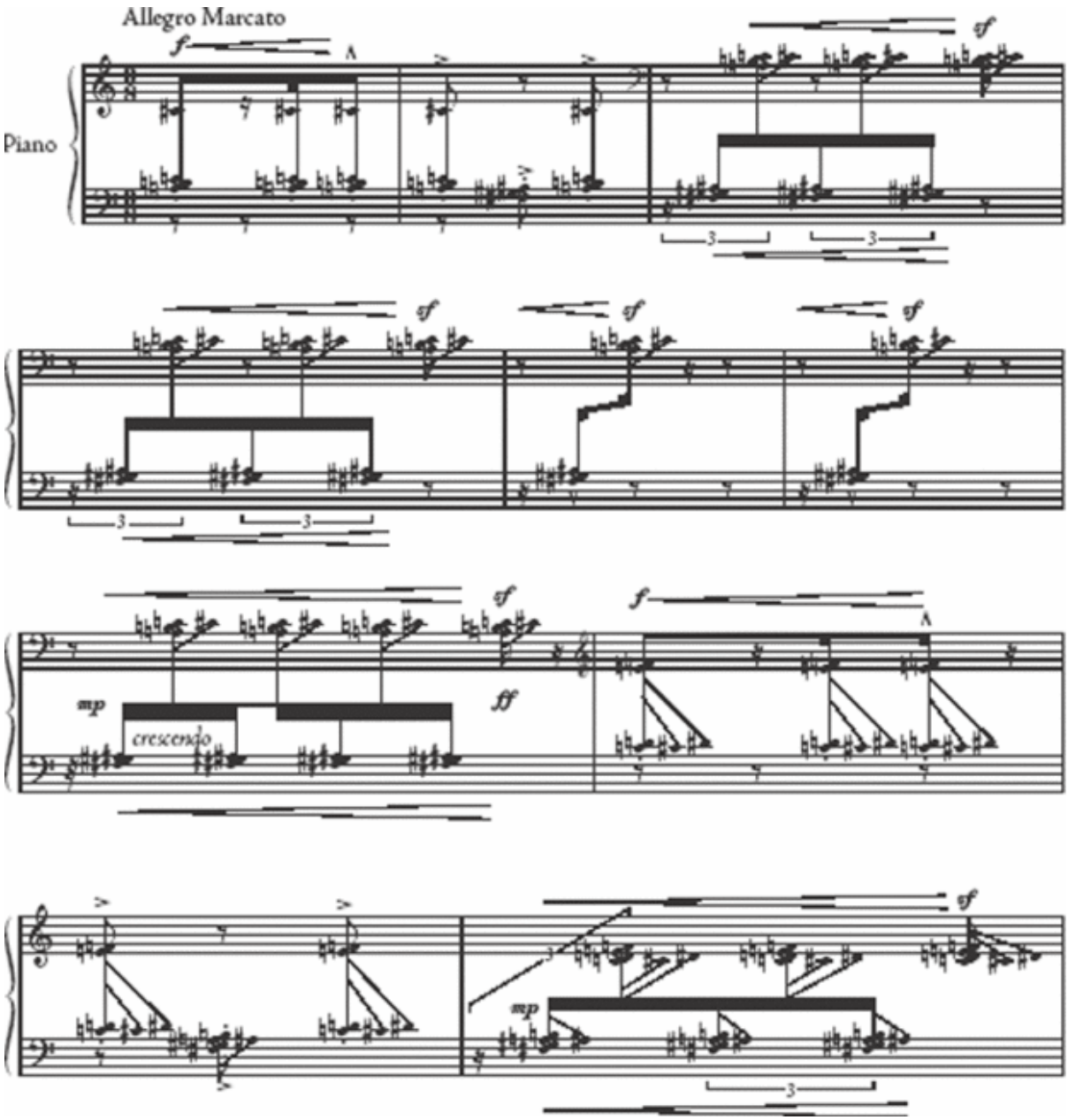
The music consists of a jiglike tune in the natural minor mode (hence identifiably "Irish"), accompanied by

forearm clusters spanning two octaves.

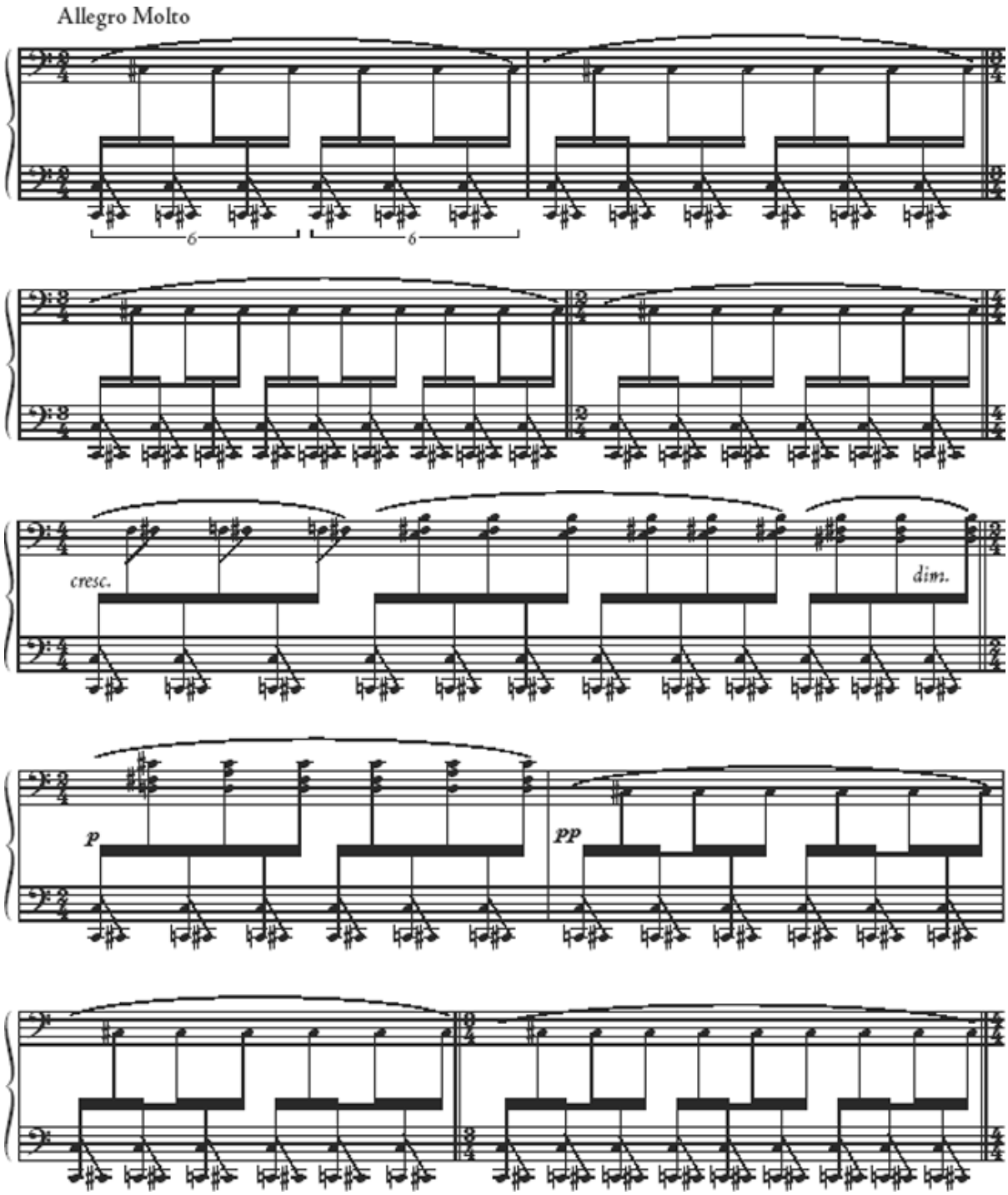
The split-level effect, one hand confined to traditional modes and scales, the other to clusters, was dictated by the motivating poetic idea, which Cowell and Varian represented in many variants. Another Halcyon tone-cluster piece, *Voice of Lir*, portrayed the father of the gods, whose commands for creating the universe were only half understood since he had only half a tongue. Therefore, according to Varian's legend, "for everything that has been created there is an unexpressed and concealed counterpart." This simple dichotomy between the precisely formed and the inchoate was a "natural" for depiction in the usual Cowellesque way, playing simple folk tunes against clusters. Cowell's apparent nonchalance with regard to stylistic discrepancy, and his indifference to (or at least his unironic acceptance of) the seeming mélange of "advanced" and "regressive" techniques, is another indication, like those we have encountered in Ives, that maximalism (especially, perhaps, when practiced by Americans) could stand entirely apart from the aesthetic of modernism.

But there was another side to Cowell. Another poetic idea motivated another kind of cluster music, the "futurist" kind, stimulated by a short trip to New York in the fall of 1916, where he met another notorious maximalist of the day, the phenomenally long-lived Leo Ornstein (1893–2002). Ornstein, an immigrant from Russia, made music that celebrated—or at least was obsessed with—speed, aggression, and the mechanization of modern life. He gave sensational piano recitals at which he assaulted audiences (to their great delight) with modestly clustery pieces bearing titles like *Suicide in an Airplane* (1913, Ex. 5-22b) and *Wild Men's Dance* (1915, Ex. 5-22a). These pieces were as of then the most spectacular musical responses to the call put out by the *futuristi*, a boisterous group of Italian artists headed by the poet Emilio Marinetti (1876–1944) and the painter Luigi Russolo (1885–1947), for an "Art of Noises" that would replace all conventional music as the appropriate sonic representation of the machine age.

A title like *Wild Men's Dance* (later amended to *Danse sauvage*) might sound more like primitivism than futurism, but as the composer and Cowell scholar Michael Hicks has observed, "in musical terms, futurism and primitivism are the same,"[60] quoting as clincher Ornstein's own avowal that he used clusters in his futuristic compositions to "project the dark brooding quality" that for him characterized "prehistoric man." Cowell provided another confirmation when he changed the title of one of his compositions from the futuristic *Dash* to the primitivistic *Tiger*.

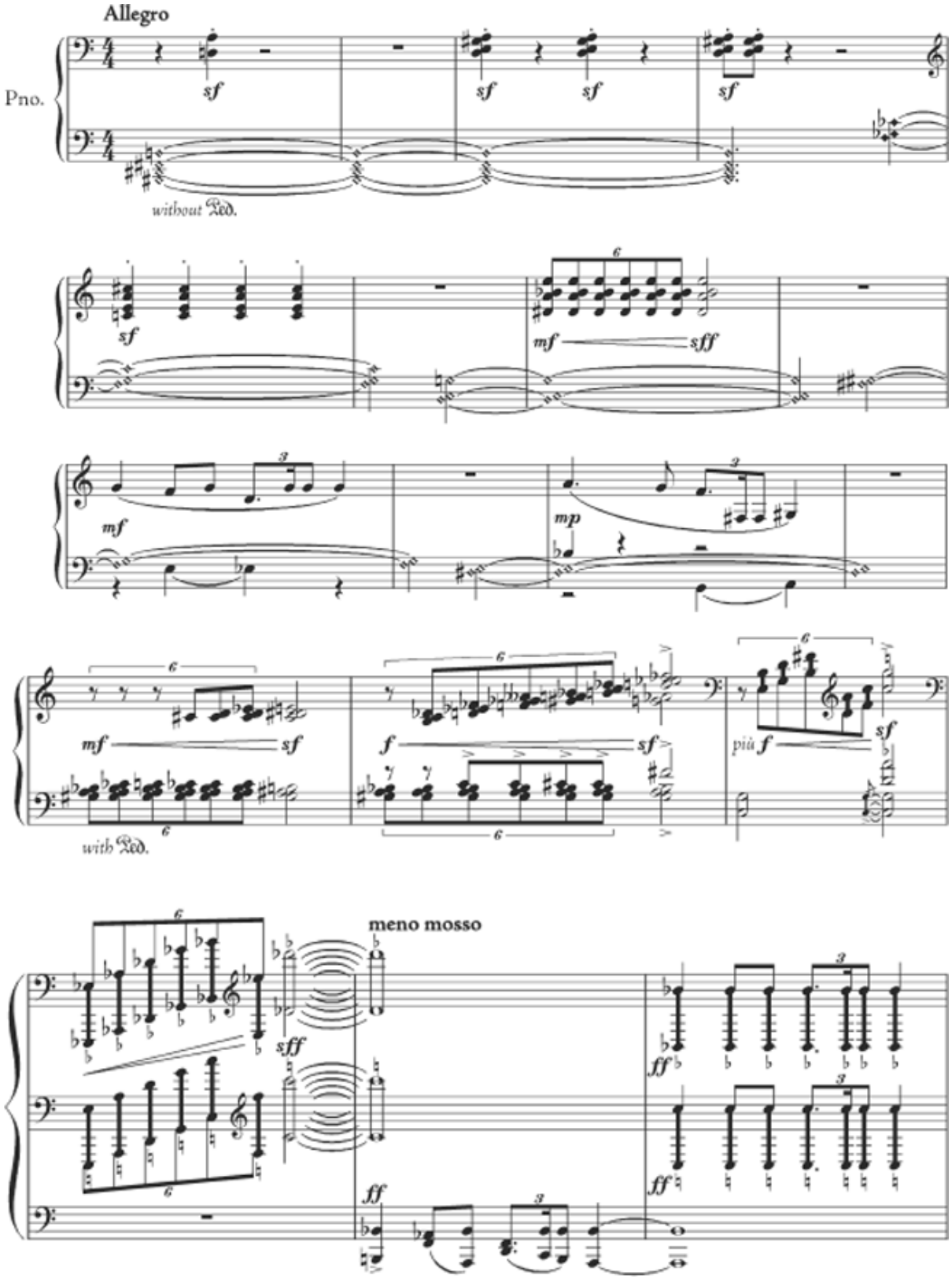


ex. 5-22a Leo Ornstein, *Danse sauvage*



ex. 5-22b Leo Ornstein, *Suicide in an Airplane*

In a spirit of friendly competition with Ornstein, Cowell produced *Dynamic Motion* (1916, Ex. 5-23), which at first he announced to audiences as an evocation of the New York subway. It brought him publicity—"at the finish," one reviewer reported in 1922, "three women lay in a dead faint in the aisle and no less than ten men had refreshed themselves [illegally, Prohibition being then in force] from the left hip"[61] — and eventual patronage, which enabled him to launch his important publishing activities. But for Cowell, futurism was a passing fling. His predilection, like Ives's, was more for the pastoral and spiritual mode than the urban, materialist one. As his career went on, he retreated considerably from his maximalist phase, seeking (as he put it to a reporter in 1955) "an amalgamation of the techniques introduced from about 1908 to about 1930, combined with the familiar elements, producing a literature with more substance, but less individual distinctions."[62] By then he was far from alone, as we shall see.



ex. 5-23 Henry Cowell, *Dynamic Motion*, mm. 1-18

But his "retreat" was already in full swing by the 1920s, for which reason Cowell is often taken less than seriously by historians in the romantic-modernist tradition. Only his cluster pieces are treated as "historic," and even then the "futuristic" ones are given preference over the "Celtic" ones, despite the evidence that this weighting reverses Cowell's own scale of values. He has been overridden, or overruled, by "history"—which is

to say, by historians. Having an inkling that this would be the case, Cowell began backdating his early compositions very much the way Ives has been accused of doing, assigning *The Tides of Manaunaun*, for example, to 1912, which gave him a clear year's priority over Ornstein, and ensured his place in the history books.

Yet was it a retreat? Was the up-to-dateness of *Dynamic Motion* clearly superior, artistically, to what may seem the quaintness of *The Tides of Manaunaun*? As early as 1933 the critic Nicolas Slonimsky called Cowell's Celtic pieces "audaciously conservative."[63] It was an apt characterization, and one that would go on describing Cowell until his death thirty-two years later. The clever contradiction in terms betrays many ambivalences; and so did Cowell's own behavior, as when he told his interviewer that "substance" (that Ivesian word!) does not depend on "individual distinctions," but at the same time rewrote his autobiography so as to polish his innovative image.

But then the very same ambivalence haunted the very outset of this chapter, with its contradictory quotations from Emerson. It had a long history in America, where—as Hicks has noted, echoing an insight voiced a century and a half earlier by Alexis de Tocqueville in *De la démocratie en Amérique* (*Democracy in America*, 1835)—there has always been felt a contradictory yet "insatiable need to be both an individual and a conformist, self-sufficient yet bound to the canons of civilization."[64] But it was also an ambivalence, born of modernism and its conflicting demands, that would presently be felt throughout the world of art.

Notes:

(56) Paul Rosenfeld, *An Hour with American Music* (1929), quoted in Judith Tick, "Ruth Crawford's 'Spiritual Concept': The Sound-Ideals of an Early American Modernist," *JAMS* XLIV (1991): 235.

(57) Quoted in *Ibid*., pp. 239–40.

(58) Quoted in Judith Tick, "Ruth Crawford's 'Spiritual Concept': The Sound-Ideals of an Early American Modernist," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* XLIV (1991): 244.

(59) Michael Hicks, "Cowell's Clusters," *Musical Quarterly* LXXVII (1993): 428, 440.

(60) Michael Hicks, *Henry Cowell, Bohemian* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), p. 184n64.

(61) Louise Vermont, "A Musical Note Butchers Paper and Cold Feet," *Greenwich Villager*, 15 April 1922.

(62) "Public Unafraid of New Music, Composer Says," *Houston Post*, 15 November 1955; quoted in Hicks, "Cowell's Clusters," p. 450.

(63) Nicolas Slonimsky, "Henry Cowell," in *American Composers on American Music*, ed. Henry Cowell (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1933), p. 62.

(64) Hicks, "Cowell's Clusters," p. 452.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)

Schoenberg, Webern, and Expressionism; Atonality

Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

REJECTING SUCCESS

> *Art is the cry of distress uttered by those who experience at first hand the fate of mankind. Who are not reconciled to it, but come to grips with it.... Who do not turn their eyes away, to shield themselves from emotions, but open them wide, so as to tackle what must be tackled. Who do, however, often close their eyes, in order to perceive things incommunicable by the senses, to envision within themselves the process that only seems to be in the world outside. The world revolves within—inside them: what bursts out is merely the echo—the work of art.*[1]
>
> —Arnold Schoenberg (1910)

In the middle of Chapter 1 we stole a glance at a tiny song, *Erwartung* ("Anticipation"), by Arnold Schoenberg composed in 1899 (Ex. 1-9). Its purpose there was to illustrate *Jugendstil*, "decadent" sensuality at its prettiest. It also illustrated the device of "the smallest link"—the use of half-step neighbors to create "color chords" that had no theoretical "textbook" standing as harmonic entities, but that were justified by the logic of voice leading. Compared with the gigantic symphonies of Mahler or the bloated one-act operas of Strauss, its immediate companions in that chapter, the song seemed modest in the extreme. There was little in it to suggest that its composer would eventually take transcendental maximalism to its furthest, most threatening extreme, or that as a pedagogue he would play an unparalleled role in its dissemination.

fig. 6-1 Arnold Schoenberg, by Egon Schiele.

Schoenberg's whole career was fraught with ironies, contradictions, and ambiguities, beginning with the paradox that one of the outstanding academic music theorists and composition teachers of the twentieth century was himself self-taught. By the time he wrote *Erwartung* the Vienna-born Schoenberg had had little musical instruction beyond the violin lessons, starting at age eight, that were typically thrust on middle-class Jewish boys. Later he taught himself cello and played in amateur quartets and orchestras. His early composing consisted of imitating the violin duos he was assigned as a child, and arranging pieces to play with his companions. He had some informal instruction in harmony from one of his playing partners, but when it came to composing in "classical" forms, he had to look them up in an encyclopedia.

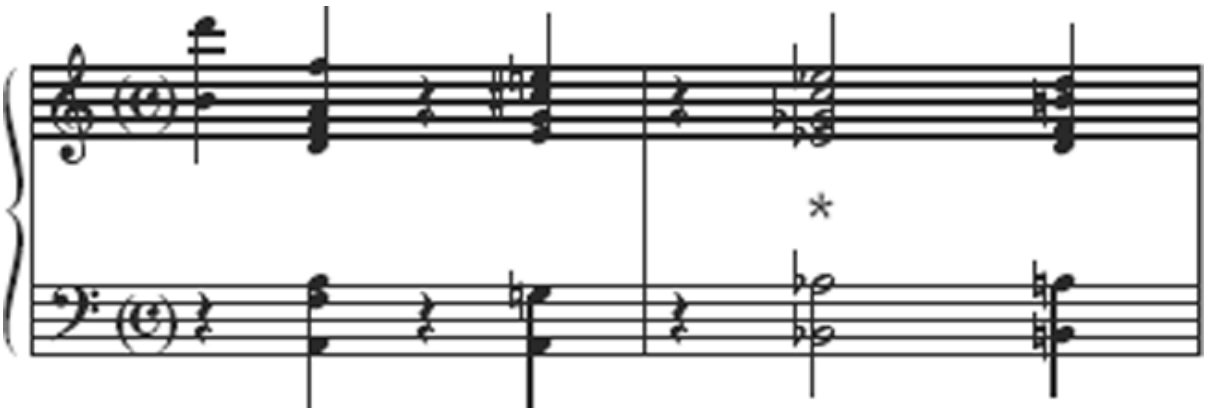
In 1895, Schoenberg, then working as a bank clerk, showed some of his early efforts to Alexander von Zemlinsky (1871 – 1942), a young conservatory-trained composer who was conducting one of the amateur orchestras in which Schoenberg played. Zemlinsky gave his friend a few lessons in counterpoint and some general advice, and that was the extent of Schoenberg's "formal" training. A string quartet that Schoenberg

wrote while consulting with Zemlinsky (who later became his brother-in-law) was accepted for performance in 1897. With that, lessons came to an end. Zemlinsky having declared him an equal, from then on Schoenberg lived the life of a professional, albeit usually unemployed, composer.

He earned his living over the next several years by conducting amateur choruses and orchestrating operettas (never having had any official instruction at all in conducting or orchestration), and in his spare time composed two works that are now recognized as masterpieces. One was *Verklärte Nacht*, op. 4 ("Transfigured night," 1899), a tone poem scored, unusually, not for orchestra but for string sextet, as if Schoenberg were deliberately casting himself as heir to both the "New German" tradition of programmatic composition in the spirit of Liszt, Wagner, and Strauss, and the "Classical" chamber-music tradition of Brahms.

Its program followed the plot of a narrative poem by Richard Dehmel, the same poet who wrote the text of the song *Erwartung*. Vienna's leading "decadent," Dehmel enjoyed a reputation for daring subject matter and *Verklärte Nacht* was no exception. It tells of a magnanimous man who forgives the woman he loves illicitly for becoming pregnant by her lawfully wedded but unloved husband. In Schoenberg's musical interpretation, the man's promise to accept the child as his transforms the anguished mood of the tone poem's D-minor beginning into a radiant D major that gleams with the starlight of natural and artificial harmonics.

Though certainly up-to-date, the music of *Verklärte Nacht* was in no way ahead of its time. Nevertheless, it achieved a scandalous reputation when the very conservative Wiener Tonkünstlerverein (Vienna Musicians' Club), which had sponsored the performance of his early quartet, rejected the tone poem for containing what its jury considered to be a compositional error (Ex. 6-1): a chord that might arguably be analyzed as a dominant-ninth chord in "fourth inversion" (ninth in the bass), but which—like the "color chord" in the song *Erwartung*—is better justified as the product of voice leading by semitones in all voices in contrary motion.



ex. 6-1 Offending passage from Arnold Schoenberg, *Verklärte Nacht*

At least Schoenberg claimed that the score was rejected for this reason, in an essay he wrote almost half a century later (from which the example, asterisk and all, was taken).[2] It seems at least as likely that it was rejected because of its risqué subject matter. But whatever the reason for it, this experience seems to have equipped Schoenberg with the resentment and the sense of alienation that a modernist giant needs. From then on, in a transformation that dated almost precisely from the turn of the century, it became a point of pride and principle with Schoenberg and his pupils (like Berg, whose early aggregate harmony was discussed in Chapter 4) always to be pushing the envelope of stylistic and technical innovation.

Even so, like any "maximalist's," Schoenberg's expressive aims remained those of his forebears, and were readily recognizable as such even when his stylistic and technical means were self-consciously advanced. That is why the other masterpiece of his early years, a vast cantata called *Gurrelieder* ("Songs of Gurre") for five solo voices, a speaker, three male choruses, a double (eight-part) mixed chorus, and an orchestra containing four flutes, four piccolos, five oboes, seven clarinets, three bassoons, two contrabassoons, ten horns, seven trumpets, seven trombones, four harps, twelve percussionists, and strings to match, was such a

great success when it was finally performed.

Based on a volume of poems by the Danish romantic writer Jens Peter Jacobsen that purported to retell a set of Nordic myths like the ones in Wagner's *Ring* (but in a "decadent" erotic manner reminiscent of *Tristan und Isolde*), the work was composed over the course of a single year (March 1900–March 1901). The orchestration took much longer. Schoenberg worked on it until 1903, when, despairing of ever getting the work performed, he turned to other projects. He did not return to it until 1910, by which time his reputation had grown to the point where a performance could be secured. He completed the scoring in 1911, and the work was finally heard the next year.

It was received with amazement and delight by a public already used to Mahler and Strauss. The self-taught composer exhibited astounding mastery of every branch of compositional technique, not excluding counterpoint (for the gigantic final chorus is cast as a double canon). Having put himself so thoroughly through the mill, he now appeared to many as virtually the miller-in-chief. One who thought so was Richard Strauss, who had exerted his influence on Schoenberg's behalf after seeing the first orchestrated excerpts from *Gurrelieder* as early as 1901. He secured a government stipend to see the younger man through the task of scoring the colossal work, and then got Schoenberg his first teaching job (the first of many) at a private conservatory in Berlin.

But by 1912, Schoenberg's style had undergone a remarkable metamorphosis, and he no longer thought *Gurrelieder* a representative (or a particularly valuable) composition. He famously refused to acknowledge the audience's applause, preferring alienation to acclaim. He offended his erstwhile benefactor Strauss as well, publicly chiding him for failing to make a comparable stylistic advance. His intransigent stance became a modernist paradigm. Combined with his awesome technical command and his increasingly prestigious teaching posts, it invested Schoenberg with a moral authority that made him influential out of all proportion to the frequency with which his music was ever performed.

Notes:

(1) Arnold Schoenberg, "Aphorismen," in *Schöpferische Konfessionen*, ed. Willi Reich (Zürich, 1964), p. 12; translation adapted from that of Leo Black, in Reich, *Arnold Schoenberg: A Critical Biography* (New York: Praeger, 1971), pp. 56–57.

(2) Arnold Schoenberg, "Criteria for the Evaluation of Music" (1946); *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, trans. Leo Black, ed. Leonard Stein (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), p. 132.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Expressionism

Arnold Schoenberg

EXPRESSION BECOMES AN “ISM”

Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The problem with *Gurrelieder*, so far as Schoenberg was concerned, was not merely its public appeal but its very public (“extrovert”) orientation. Mythic pageantry was certainly a viable and time-honored manifestation of romanticism, but Schoenberg’s artistic isolation had wed him to an older and, he thought, truer romantic attitude. Indeed, Schoenberg’s was an updated and intensified version of the original German romantic attitude, the one associated musically with Beethoven (as interpreted by critics such as E. T. A. Hoffmann), and with the “Schubert circle.”

These early romantics saw the highest, most serious purpose of art in expressing and achieving a unique human subjectivity, the quality they described as *Innigkeit*, “inwardness.” Only through artistic creation—or, failing that, through artistic empathy—does one truly become a person, according to this very pure romantic view. But only an art that is uniquely personal can be the vehicle through which true personhood—a truly “inner” expressive freedom or “autonomy”—is achieved and communicated. Such art was by nature very difficult both to create and to understand, since it demanded the resolute avoidance of traits that made artworks (and their creators) seem similar to one another rather than different and unique. In a word, it demanded the rejection of conventions.

The task that confronted artists who returned to this goal a hundred years after Beethoven and Schubert was more difficult yet, since the stylistic departures that distinguished the work of the early romantics had long since become conventional. Even the music that had seemed to mark the furthest extreme of originality and personal idiosyncrasy at the beginning of the century—Mahler’s and Strauss’s—had become socially accepted and (in Schoenberg’s view) conventional by 1911, when the composer wrote to the painter Wassily Kandinsky, then a close friend, a famous letter that reads today like a public manifesto: “One must express *oneself*! Express oneself *directly*! Not one’s taste or one’s upbringing, or one’s intelligence, knowledge, or skill. Not all these *acquired* characteristics, but that which is *inborn*, *instinctive*.”[3]

As Schoenberg came to see it, all that *Gurrelieder* had displayed, with its gaudy orchestration and ostentatious counterpoint, was taste, intelligence, knowledge, and skill. Worse, the emotions so stunningly portrayed—the amorous ecstasy, the blasphemous rage, the ghostly horror, the glorious elation—were not Schoenberg’s but those of Jacobsen’s characters. They were “anyone’s” emotions, and they were expressed in terms that anyone could have learned from models in Wagner and Strauss. Nor were the oratorio’s plot and action, being external to the emotions, a valid subject for art, which to be authentic must henceforth concern itself, Schoenberg now decreed, with “the representation of inner occurrences”[4] alone.

Schoenberg first used this phrase in a lecture he delivered in 1928, to account for the unprecedented turns his art had taken since the time of his early and (he now thought) spurious success. It was his definition of “expressionism,” a term that over the course of a decade or so had become fairly common as a describer of contemporary German art, and that is now part of the standard art historian’s vocabulary. It is less often used in connection with music; but when it is, it is invariably applied to Schoenberg. As long as he accepted it himself, however belatedly, it seems fair to adopt it here, especially as his outburst to Kandinsky, quoted above, was perhaps the best capsule summary ever made of expressionist aims.

Notes:

(3) Schoenberg to Wassily Kandinsky, 24 January 1911; *Arnold Schoenberg/Wassily Kandinsky, Letters, Pictures and Documents*, ed. Jelena Hahl-Koch, trans. John C. Crawford (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), p. 23.

(4) Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony* [*Harmonielehre*, 1911], trans. Roy E. Carter (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), p. 18.

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See also from Grove Music Online
Expressionism

Absolute music

ART AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

It seems an even better one, and even more exactly suggests the difference between expressionism and the earlier ("Hoffmannesque") romantic concept from which it grew, when the sentence that immediately precedes it is reinstated. "Art," declared Schoenberg to Kandinsky, "belongs to the *unconscious*!"[5] He was using, as we would now say, a "buzzword." Expressionism, especially as preached and practiced in Schoenberg's Vienna, cannot be fully understood apart from the psychoanalytical movement that sprang up at the same time and in the same place. Both movements had the same compelling if paradoxical aim: to explore the human unconscious, in the one case through scientific inquiry, in the other through art.

But how can one consciously do that? According to Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), the founder of psychoanalysis, the "inner occurrences" that conditioned human subjectivity, and therefore provided the most authentic subject matter for expressionist art, were governed by emotions, drives, and wishes of which the human subject was unaware, often because they were socially unacceptable and therefore repressed from consciousness. Thus the expressionist artist's subversive task was to portray something—or rather, the results of something—that was hidden not only from others but even from the one doing the portraying.

As Schoenberg put it in a program note accompanying one of his most radical expressionist works, *Five Orchestral Pieces*, op. 16 (1909; first performed in London in 1912), "the music seeks to express all that swells in us subconsciously like a dream."[6] Even before one asks how one is to make such subject matter intelligible or communicable, and even before one shudders at the thought of the nightmares such art might communicate, one has to ask how such a subject matter can even be apprehended by the artist's own conscious creative faculty. How can one express what is unknowable?

fig. 6-2 Sigmund Freud's study at his house in Maresfield Gardens, London, 1938–1939.

That is the expressionist version of the old romantic conundrum of "absolute music"—music that describes the indescribable and expresses the inexpressible—updated for the psychoanalytical age. Absolute music achieved this feat, in Hoffmann's inimitable phrase, by becoming the "secret Sanskrit of the soul." Schoenberg faced an even harder task. Sanskrit, the ancient liturgical language of the Hindus, a dead and distant tongue that for Hoffmann symbolized everything esoteric, was after all a "natural language," a real medium of communication. To realize the demands of expressionism without compromise would entail the old philosophers' riddle of a "private language," a manifest contradiction in terms. Or was it? Could one, truly recording one's "inner occurrences" and doing full justice to their uniqueness, utter anything but nonsense? Can something truly and totally unique ever be communicated?

It would be better to leave these inevitable paradoxes to one side for now. We will have to return to them—repeatedly—because Schoenberg's work posed with particular urgency and clarity the cursed question of intelligibility, alias "comprehensibility" (to use the word he himself preferred) or "accessibility" (to use more recent critical language). It is a question that has always dogged modernist art, and in the wake of Schoenberg's influence the question achieved the dimensions of a crisis. But first we must trace the process through which Schoenberg—courageously? quixotically?—attempted to meet the impossibly contradictory demands that art and history, as he envisioned them, were making not only on him, but on all artists who aspired to authenticity.

Notes:

(5) *Arnold Schoenberg/Wassily Kandinsky, Letters*, p. 23.

(6) Schoenberg, Program note to the first performance of *Five Orchestra Pieces*, op. 16 (1909); Nicolas Slonimsky, *Music since 1900* (4th ed., New York: Scribners, 1971), p. 207.

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See also from Grove Music Online
Harmony: Historical development, early 20th century

Second Viennese School

"EMANCIPATION OF DISSONANCE"

Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

In later life, Schoenberg liked to say that the musical explorations that made him notorious were thrust upon him against his will. Generalizing from what he perceived to be his own experience, he made bold to assert that "Art is born of 'I must,' not 'I can.'"[7] There was a certain pomposity to the claim. It smacked of Hegel's "world-historical" figure, the unconscious or unwilling servant of history's grand design. But there was a kernel of biographical truth in it as well. It is a fact that a period of severe psychological disturbance immediately preceded Schoenberg's most radically maximalist phase. In 1906–1907 he suffered a major depression, one of several such periods that made his creative output sporadic. (The catalogue of no other comparably productive composer includes so many unfinished works.) His wife, neglected, deserted him and their two small children for a lover, the expressionist painter Richard Gerstl, who committed suicide when she returned to Schoenberg (the composer having also seriously if briefly contemplated taking his own life).

This turbulent episode has often been singled out as the catalyst of Schoenberg's new and radical idiom. While it may be doubted whether the composer's emotional and marital upheavals could in themselves have furnished him with musical ideas, let alone a theory of art, the extremity and the sheer violence of the style that emerged—for many, its most compelling aspects—may well have been conditioned by the extremity and violence of the emotions for which Schoenberg now sought an expressive or confessional outlet. The specific means through which Schoenberg sought to realize these ends, however, were conditioned by his knowledge and experience as a musician.

With Schoenberg, equally important and influential as a composer and as a music theorist and pedagogue, we have a unique opportunity to compare theory with practice, particularly at this early phase of his career when he incorporated his most radical artistic ideas directly into his theoretical writings. The most important of these was the *Harmonielehre* ("Textbook of harmony"), which appeared in 1911 as the distillation of nine years of teaching experience, during which time his pupils had included Alban Berg (1885–1935) and Anton von Webern (1883–1945), who as composers would join Schoenberg in his quests and are now regarded as forming, with him, what amounts to an expressionist "school" (sometimes referred to as the "Second Viennese School" by those who have sought to put them in a direct line of succession from the "school" of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven).

The *Harmonielehre* is a basic course. It begins like any other harmony textbook with elementary instruction on major and minor scales, triads and inversions, progressions, modulations, and the like. Its final section, however, deals with what was at the time avowedly experimental material; and this concluding portion begins, very significantly, with a brief chapter, "Consonance and Dissonance," in which that most categorical harmonic distinction is boldly relativized. The first two sentences in this chapter declare the expressionist bias of the whole book: "Art in its most primitive state is a simple imitation of nature. But it quickly becomes imitation of nature in the wider sense of this idea, that is, not merely imitation of outer but also of inner nature."[8] Schoenberg's discussion of consonance and dissonance is actually a veiled description of his own recent music, cast artfully (and perhaps ironically recalling the Wagnerian slogans of old) as a speculation on what the future may have in store. The difference, he asserts, is only a matter of degree, not of kind. Consonance and dissonance are no more opposites than two and ten are opposites, as the frequency

numbers (i.e., the measurable ratios of the overtone series) indeed show; and the expressions “consonance” and “dissonance,” insofar as they signify an antithesis, are false. It all simply depends on the growing ability of the analyzing ear to familiarize itself with the remote overtones, thereby expanding the conception of what is euphonious, suitable for art, so that it embraces the whole natural phenomenon.

> What today is remote can tomorrow be close at hand; it is all a matter of whether one can get closer. And the evolution of music has followed this course: it has drawn into the stock of artistic resources more and more of the harmonic possibilities inherent in the tone.
>
> So if I continue to use the expressions “consonance” and “dissonance,” even though they are unwarranted, I do so because there are signs that the evolution of harmony will, in a short time, prove the inadequacy of this classification.[9]

Dissonances, Schoenberg proposes, are simply “the more remote consonances.” It is a first step toward liberating musical thinking from convention—“from one’s taste or one’s upbringing, or one’s intelligence, knowledge, or skill,” as Schoenberg put it to Kandinsky the same year that the *Harmonielehre* was published—and opening it up to “that which is *inborn, instinctive*.”

Schoenberg called the logical conclusion (and the practical result) toward which such thinking aimed the “emancipation of dissonance.”[10] The term has excellent political “vibes,” especially when one considers that it is the composer, rather than “dissonance” itself, that is liberated by such a turn. As far as dissonance itself is concerned, it is not so much liberated as conceptually erased. (What are the implications of such erasure for listening? Is the listener liberated along with the composer? Let us repress these questions for now, on Freud’s assurance that what is repressed must inevitably return.) As the concluding chapters of the *Harmonielehre* confirm, the first result of the “emancipation of dissonance” is the composer’s absolution from the obligation to resolve complex harmonies into simpler ones.

Notes:

(7) Schoenberg, “Problems in Teaching Art” (1911); *Style and Idea*, p. 365.

(8) Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, p. 18.

(9) *Ibid*., p. 21.

(10) The term as such appears for the first time in “Opinion or Insight?,” an essay of 1926 (*Style and Idea*, p. 260).

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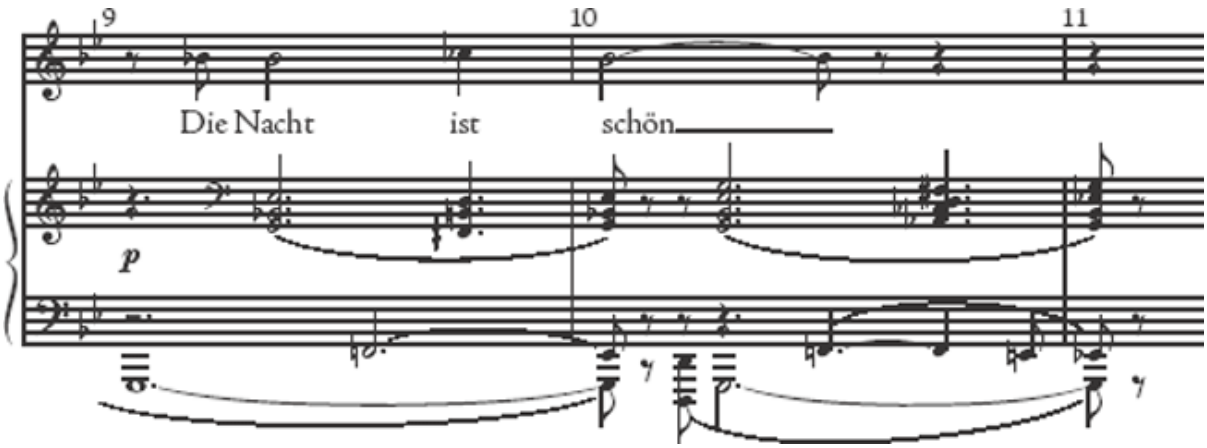
See also from Grove Music Online
Arnold Schoenberg

THEORY AND PRACTICE

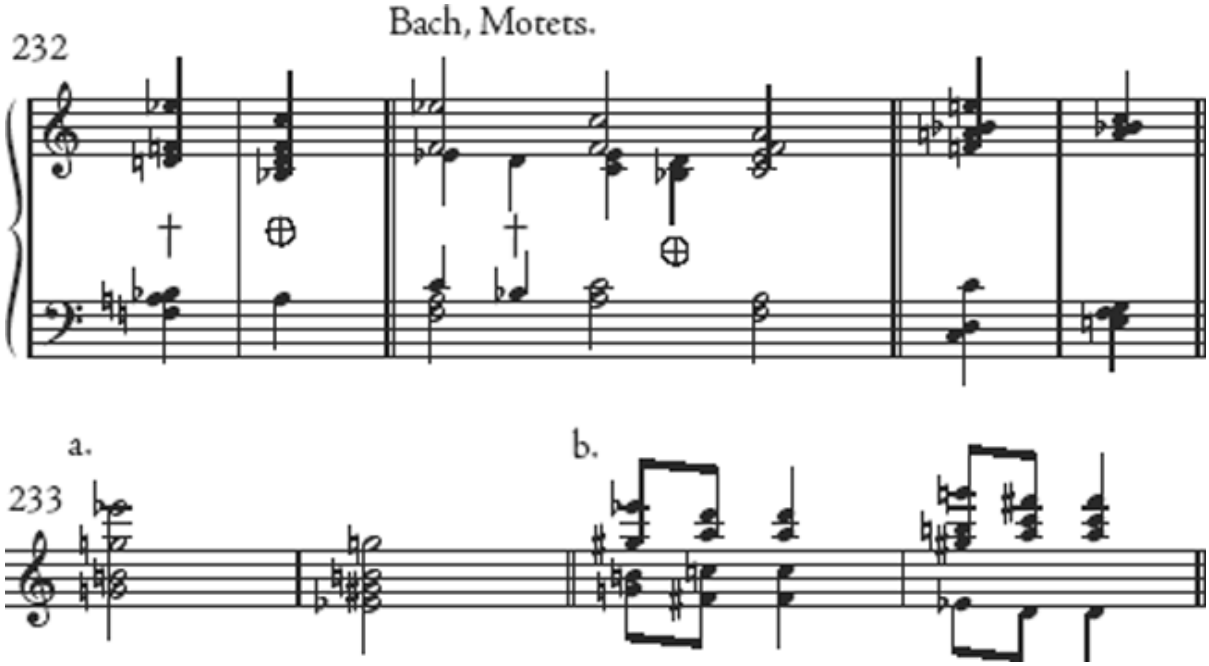
Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

So much for the theory. To observe it in practice, we can return to the harmonic progression we encountered at the beginning of the song *Erwartung*. Such progressions, in which "color chords" arise from the use of multiple neighbor tones, occur time and again in Schoenberg's early songs. The one in Ex. 6-2 comes from *Der Wanderer* ("The wanderer"), op. 6, no. 8, a Nietzsche setting that dates from 1905. In the context of E-flat major, the unusual chord achieves both its intelligibility and its poetic effect from its easily apprehended relationship to the tonic triad.



ex. 6-2 Arnold Schoenberg, *Der Wanderer*, Op. 6, no. 8, mm. 9–11

Six years later, in the *Harmonielehre*, Schoenberg suggests that such chords no longer need justification by voice leading. In a passage that is famous for its sardonic wit, he cites some strong dissonances in one of Bach's motets that conservative musicians (he calls them "aestheticians," upholders of beauty) would surely decry in a modern composition, and a celebrated example from Mozart's G-minor Symphony (Ex. 6-3). He notes that in all cases they are products of "non-harmonic tones" on their way to resolution; but he takes special satisfaction in pointing out that Mozart's chord (almost exactly like the ones cited in Ex. 6-2 from Schoenberg's own music), which functions as an "incomplete neighbor" (that is, an appoggiatura), lacks a preparation.



ex. 6-3 Arnold Schoenberg, *Harmonielehre*, examples 232 and 233

Casting himself in solidarity with Mozart, Schoenberg speculates on what prompted such licenses. Mozart emerges in Schoenberg's description as something of an expressionist himself creating "according to the laws of *his* nature" despite the protests of the uncreative upholders of convention. But more significant, perhaps, is Schoenberg's assertion that a continual evolution in musical style led from Mozart's innovations to his own, making them not only predictable but inevitable—which is another way of saying that they were necessary. Whereas even in Mozart "such harmonies have been used almost exclusively where they can be explained as passing tones and the like," for the composer of the present, "they are henceforth just chords"; and he adds, even more ominously, that "they are only superficially annexed to the old system, for they are judged according to a different principle, according to their origin, and are not referred to roots."[11]

Why ominously? Because if such chords are no longer dependent for their understanding and use on their relationship to functional harmonies (i.e., harmonies with roots), and if they can succeed one another with all the freedoms of consonances, then the whole system of functions, undergirding what at least since the seventeenth century had provided music with its "tonality," becomes moot. And indeed, one of the closing chapters in the *Harmonielehre*—significantly, it is the first chapter in which Schoenberg cites his own works as examples—bears the title *Über schwebende und aufgehobene Tonalität* ("On Fluctuating and Suspended Tonality").

The former, fluctuating tonality, is a key that is suggested though never fully established through a cadence, and is therefore inherently unstable. The prime example, unsurprisingly, is the Prelude to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. Suspended tonality, for which Schoenberg cites precedents in "classical development sections," is a situation in which no key at all is forecast. Rather than harmony, what holds such music together will be the coherence of the thematic material: its motivic consistency "creates the opportunity for such harmonic looseness through its characteristic figurations."[12]

Notes:

(11) Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, p. 330.

(12) *Ibid*., p. 384.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Atonality

ATONALITY?

Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

These are the conditions under which music becomes, in a word that has become standard terminology over Schoenberg's objections, "atonal." Schoenberg objected to the word because its connotations were purely negative: merely to say what something is not is a far cry from saying what it is. He preferred to call his music "pantonal," suggesting a single transcendent, all-encompassing tonality rather than the mere avoidance of custom, but the term failed to catch on. Other candidates that have been proposed over the years—"contextual," "motivic"—have fared even less well. Like "Gregorian chant" and "English horn," "atonal music" is one of those historically sanctioned misnomers we have to live with. Resigning ourselves to it, however, should not dull our perception of its inadequacy or its disadvantages.

The greatest disadvantage has been the creation of a spurious and very misleading antonym—"tonal music"—that has arisen in the wake of the polemics surrounding "atonality." The term never existed (because it never had any reason to exist) during the "common practice" period it ostensibly describes. Its crude lumping effect has all too often discouraged precise distinctions and clear conceptualization.

For one thing, the polemical question "tonal vs. atonal" often intrudes needlessly into discussions of consonance vs. dissonance, or of chromatic vs. diatonic, and confuses the issues. The definition of tonality rests neither on levels of consonance nor on degrees of chromaticism, but on the functional differentiation of scale degrees. If high chromaticism is taken as a sign of atonality, then the Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde* might be regarded as an example (or, perhaps, a harbinger) of atonality, when in fact few compositions depend more clearly or crucially on functional distinction between the dominant (in this case endlessly prolonged) and the tonic (in this case excruciatingly withheld).

Similarly, if high dissonance is taken as a sign of atonality, then the "horror fanfares" in the finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony might be regarded as an example or a harbinger of atonality, when in fact their whole effect depends on our recognizing an actual collision between the tonic and the diminished seventh on its leading tone (a common substitute for the dominant that preserves and even intensifies its functional tendency). In fact, both Wagner's composition and Beethoven's (indeed, Wagner and Beethoven themselves) have been advanced as harbingers of atonality by those intent on giving Schoenberg's practices a historical justification. Such a tendentious exploitation of the term is already evidence of its deleterious potential: calling Beethoven or Wagner "atonal" hardly enhances our understanding of them, or even of Schoenberg.

But now consider a composition based entirely on the whole-tone scale (as Ex. 2-8, Debussy's "Voiles", comes close to being). As long as it remains within the confines of the scale it will contain no chromaticism, and its dissonance can only be relatively mild, since minor seconds, major sevenths, and even perfect fourths are excluded from its vocabulary. And yet (as we learned in Chapter 2) the whole-tone scale, which contains neither perfect intervals nor semitones, and in which all the steps are equal, can assign no functional differentiation to its degrees and support no traditionally functional cadences. Thus traditional tonal relations can be effectively challenged without any chromaticism or dissonance, while a high level of chromaticism and dissonance can actually serve to enhance our awareness of tonal functions.

Everything depends on how chromaticism, or dissonance, or any other musical characteristic, is handled. And that signals another danger. Terms like "tonal" and "atonal" are often mistakenly thought to refer to

inherent qualities of music rather than compositional practices, and (as in the case of consonance and dissonance) to place in categorical opposition what is better viewed on a continuum. Can we actually draw a categorical line between “tonal” and “atonal” and pinpoint its crossing with precision? Do we know what we mean when we say that one piece (or even one composer) is more or less “tonal” than another? Are we stating a fact or making an interpretation?

As our present discussion of Schoenberg’s music continues, and in chapters to come, it should become evident that in music, as in so many other arenas, a priori insistence on black-and-white distinctions is intellectually counterproductive. It hinders observation, desensitizes the mind to nuances and ambiguities, and reduces analysis to crude pigeonholing, lowering rather than enhancing its cognitive benefit. Experience teaches us that life is lived (and art is created) in infinite shades of gray.

So to understand what Schoenberg meant when he spoke of his breakthrough into a “pantonal” idiom, one where tonality is permanently fluctuating (or permanently suspended), we need to evaluate the relevant musical procedures and their results, but we also need to inquire further as to the reasons why Schoenberg—both as a musician and, more generally, as an artist—felt the need for just these procedures. Only in this way will we end up with a precise and positive concept and avoid the intellectual black hole into which empty negative categories like “atonality” can beckon us.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Arnold Schoenberg

Alban Berg

“CONTEXTUALITY”

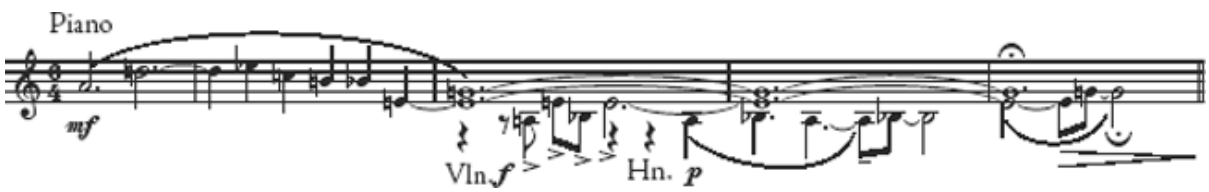
Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

One strategy might be to observe a single motivic entity operating in Schoenberg’s music both in a context where it has differentiated degree functions and in one where it does not. A clue toward finding such a motive comes from a composition by Berg, a *Kammerkonzert* (“Chamber concerto”) for violin, piano, and thirteen wind instruments, which he composed in 1923–1925 and offered to Schoenberg as a belated fiftieth-birthday present. It opens with a five-bar motto in which Berg, using the German pitch-letter associations familiar from the famous BACH cipher (B♭–A–C–B), encoded Schoenberg’s name, Webern’s name, and his own name as musical themes played respectively by the piano, the violin, and a French horn from the accompanying band (Ex. 6-4):

ArnolD SCHönBErG = A–D–E♭–C–B–B♭–E–G;

Anton wEBErn = A–E–B♭–E;

AlBAn BErG = A–B♭–A–B♭–E–G



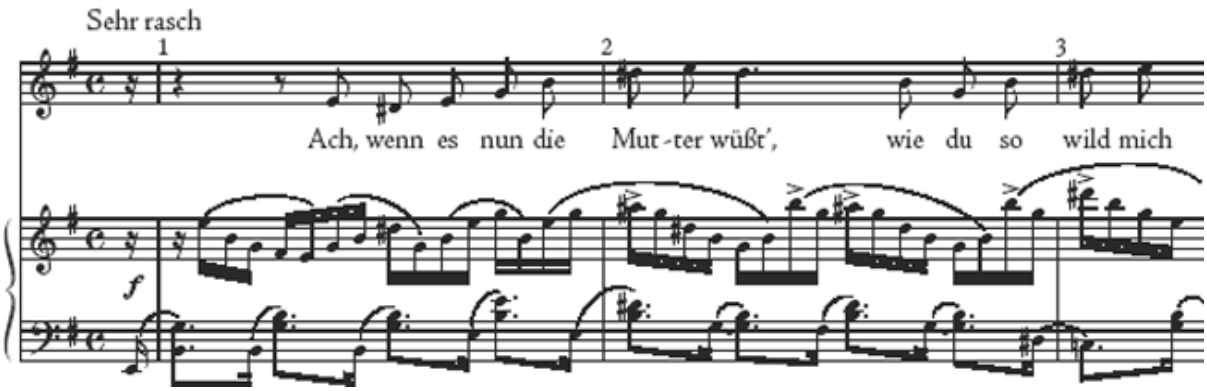
ex. 6-4 Alban Berg, motto from the *Kammerkonzert*

Berg’s compliment to his teacher, as he pointed out in a letter, hinged on the fact that the notes in the names of Webern and Berg are all included in that of Schoenberg (a feature that the later musical development would make conspicuous).[13] But he was not the first in the Schoenberg circle to use the pitch-letter code to construct thematic material. Schoenberg himself had long made a habit of it. And what is more, he often used his own name for the purpose, as if signing his work. Indeed, he may have got the idea in the first place from being an enthusiastic amateur painter. Alternatively (or simultaneously), the cipher of his name may have symbolically or superstitiously embodied for Schoenberg the essence of his singular identity, the “inborn, instinctive self” which (as we know from his letter to Kandinsky) he regarded as the true subject matter of any artist’s—any *true* artist’s—art.

Varieties of the motif with which Berg began his Chamber Concerto can be found in many of Schoenberg’s early works. Since most of the time he used only the six tones derived from his surname—E♭ (“Es” in German), C, B (“h” in German), B♭, E, G—this particular group of notes is often informally called the “Eschbeg set” in the voluminous analytical literature that has grown up around his work. Perhaps its earliest occurrence (Ex. 6-5) was sighted by the music analyst Allen Forte in one of the songs from Schoenberg’s op. 6 (the set from which Ex. 6-2 above is also drawn).[14] It is the beginning of the third item in the opus

Mädchenlied ("The maiden's song") to a poem by Paul Remer, composed in October 1905.

In this early instance, every note in the Eschbeg set can be assigned a function within the signature key of E minor, which is why E♭ and B♭ are spelled D♯ and A♯. That, plus the fact that this is the earliest known occurrence of the set, plus the presence in the passage of a single note that is foreign to the set (the F♯ in the right hand on the second beat of m. 1), might seem to weaken the argument that Schoenberg was employing his signature set as a pitch source "with premeditation" (to use the precise vocabulary of criminal law). On the other hand, the frequency with which the set occurs from this point forward in Schoenberg's work has been cited by some as sufficient evidence of his premeditation, even the first time.

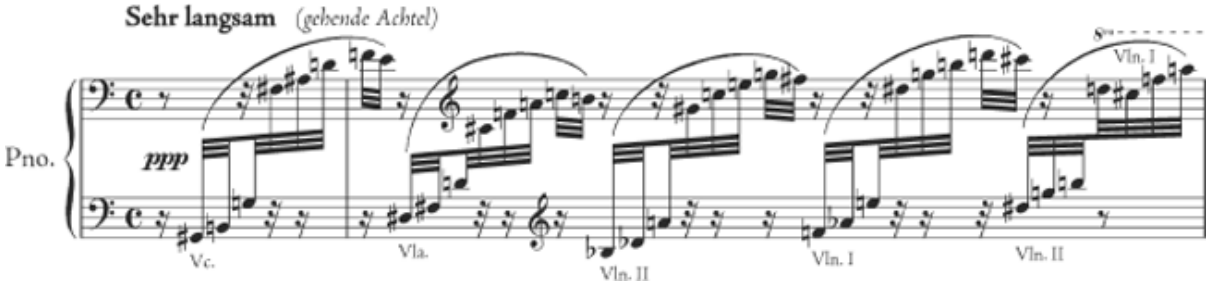


ex. 6-5 Arnold Schoenberg, *Mädchenlied*, Op. 6, no. 3, beginning

But there is no need to insist upon or argue the point. Even if we concede that this early occurrence was coincidental (or, to take the middle ground, that his early unpremeditated use of the set might, on reflection, have prompted Schoenberg's later premeditated usages), the passage still affords us the comparison we seek between functional and nonfunctional—or if you must, "tonal" and "atonal"—deployments of the same group of tones, so that we may discover the particular ("positive") properties of "atonal" syntax.

For the nonfunctional counterpart we can turn to one of Schoenberg's most famous compositions, the last movement of his Second String Quartet, op. 10 (1907–1908), the work with which his "expressionist" style is often said to begin. As he had previously done in *Verklärte Nacht*, he transferred to the chamber medium devices more often found in contemporary orchestral music. Following the example of Mahler, who had ended his Second Symphony with two movements in which the instrumental ensemble suddenly accompanies the singing of a text, Schoenberg added a soprano solo to the concluding movements of the Second Quartet, singing poems by Stefan George (1868–1933), Germany's leading avant-garde poet.

The slow movement, a theme and variations in a very chromatic but still functioning G♭ major, incorporates a setting of "Litanei," a quasi-religious poem about renunciation. It ends with a prayer, "Kill my longings, close my wounds, take my love away and grant me Thy peace!" The quartet's finale could be understood as the answer to the prayer. It is a setting of a much longer poem called "Entrückung," a highly poetic noun of George's invention that comes from the verb *entrücken*, which simply means "to remove" or "to carry off." The new noun might be translated as "transport" or "rapture" or (most literally) "swept-awayness." Both the poem's title and its famous opening line, "I feel the air of another planet," have become emblems of the musical departure Schoenberg intended his setting both to symbolize and to enact.



ex. 6-6 Arnold Schoenberg, Quartet no. 2, IV (*Entrückung*), arr. Berg, m. 1

As shown in Ex. 6-6 (given in Alban Berg's transcription for voice and piano) '*Entrückung*' begins with some word-painting involving both an explicit external gesture and an esoteric "inner" meaning to which, after our discussion of the Eschbeg set, we can gain privileged access. Schoenberg described the outer side of it in a program note he wrote to accompany a recording issued in 1949. The arching "arabesques" (curving lines) that are passed up from cello to viola to the violins, representing "the departure from earth to another planet," suggest the experience of "becoming relieved from gravitation—passing through clouds into thinner and thinner air."[15]

Notes:

(13) Alban Berg to Schoenberg, 9 February 1925; Juliane Brand, Christopher Hailey, and Donald Harris, eds., *The Berg-Schoenberg Correspondence* (New York: Norton, 1987), pp. 334–37.

(14) See Allen Forte, "Schoenberg's Creative Evolution: The Path to Atonality," *Musical Quarterly* LXIV (1978): 133–76.

(15) Schoenberg, "Analysis of the Second Quartet" (1949), in *Schoenberg, Berg, Webern: The String Quartets: A Documentary Study*, ed. Ursula von Rauchhaupt (Hamburg: Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft, 1971), booklet accompanying LaSalle Quartet recording, DG 2713 006, p. 48.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

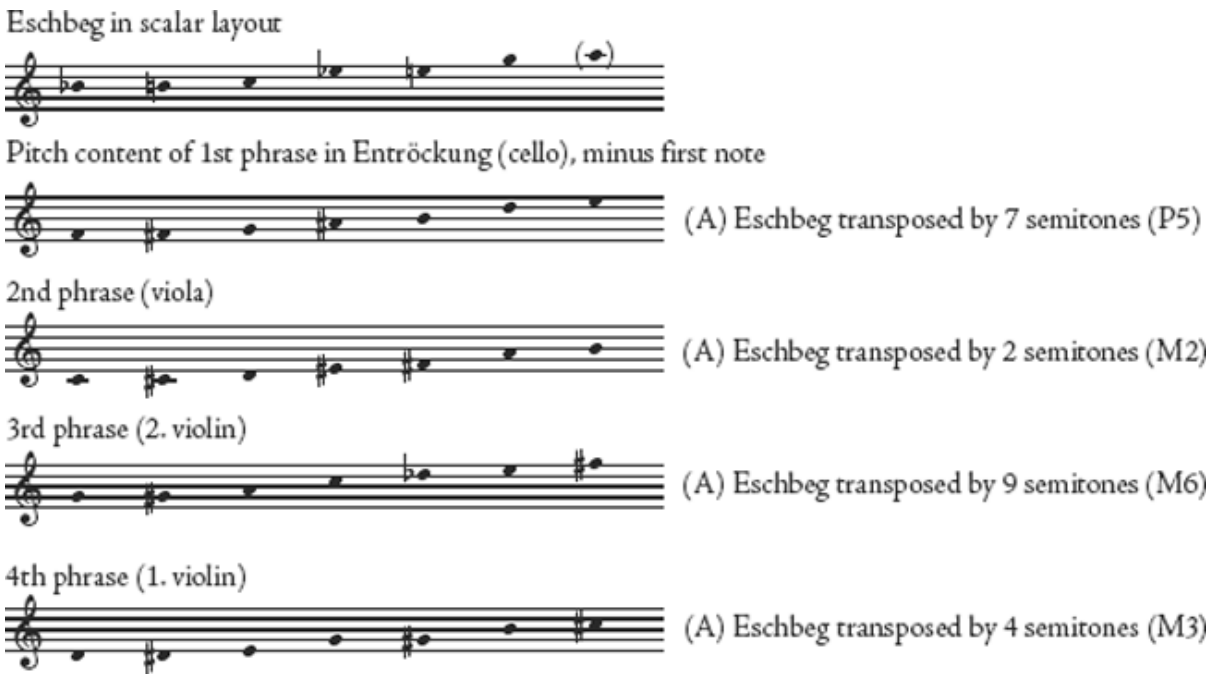
See also from Grove Music Online
Atonality

TONAL OR ATONAL?

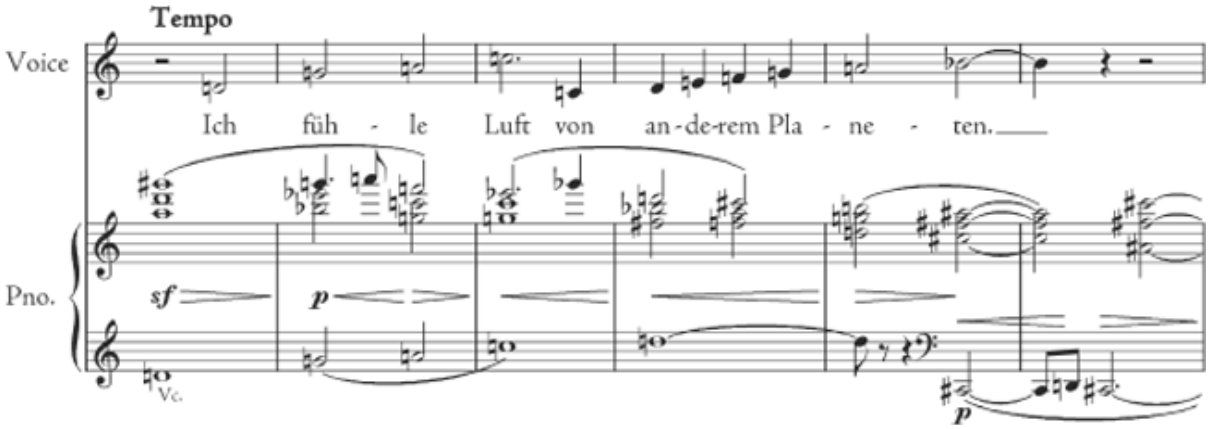
Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

That much is fairly obvious. What the composer withheld from this description, possibly because it would have required too technical an explanation for a record sleeve, is the really crucial matter: each one in the initial series of arabesques, minus its first and last notes, is a transposition of the Eschbeg set, Schoenberg's musical signature, leaving no doubt as to exactly whose consciousness is being buffeted through space, and focusing attention not merely on the buffeting but on the consciousness itself, that is, the "inward," subjective experience.

The exactness of the transpositions—as it happens, through an ascending circle of fifths—shows the composer treating this crucial musical configuration far more explicitly as a *motif*, a discrete and basic melodic shape, than he had done previously. Ex. 6-7 shows the untransposed Eschbeg set, economically represented so that its constituent pitches ascend within the narrowest possible intervallic confines. (Forte calls this manner of representing a pitch-class set the "best normal order"; it is very useful for making comparisons.) The four transpositions at the start of *Entrückung*, all similarly displayed, follow the original set.



ex. 6-7 Transposition of the "Eschbeg" set in Arnold Schoenberg, Quartet no. 2, IV (*Entrückung*)



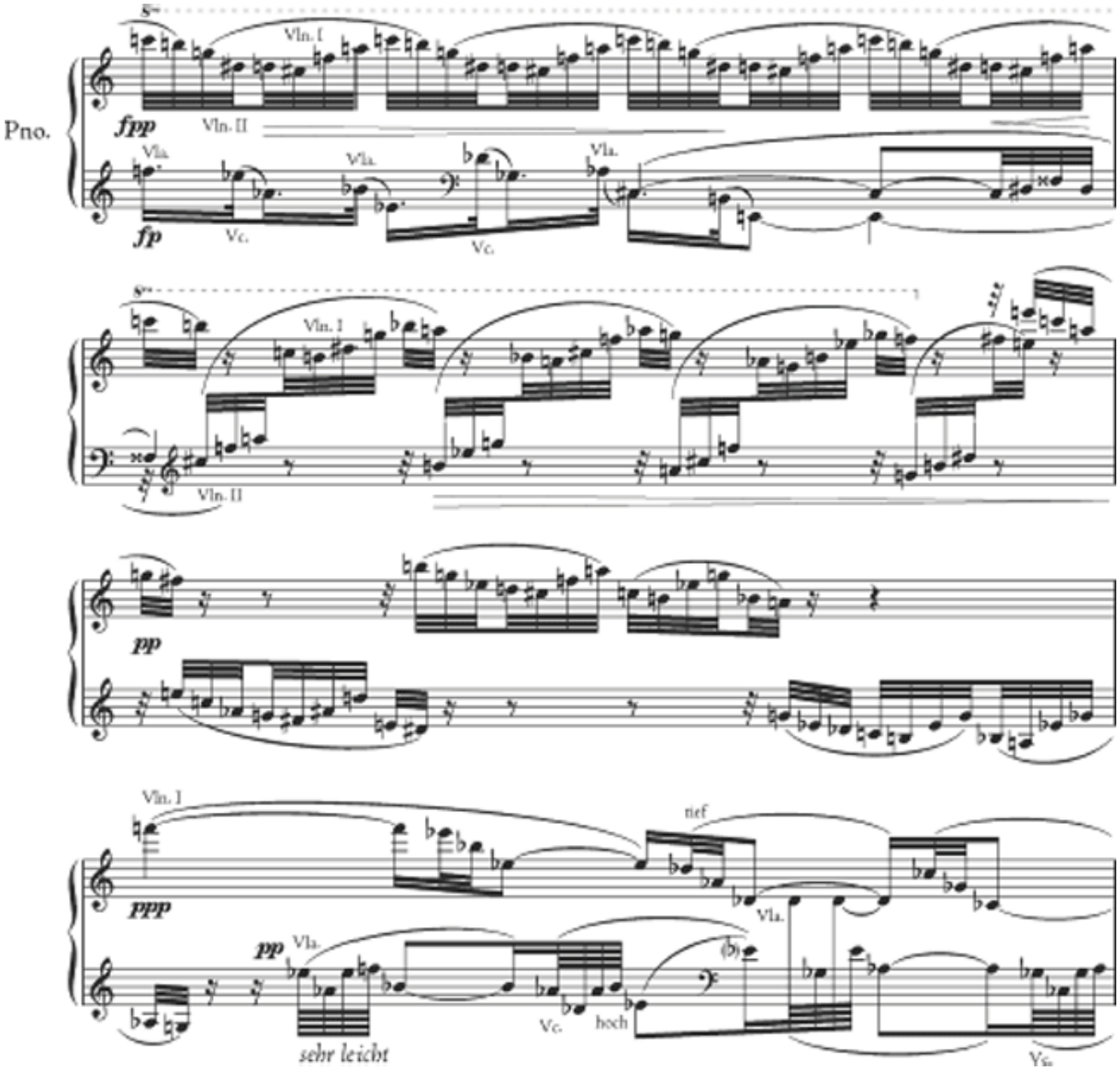
ex. 6-8 Arnold Schoenberg, Quartet no. 2, IV (*Entrückung*), arr. Berg, mm. 21–26

The interval of transposition between the pitch level of original Eschbeg set and that of the first arabesque is the same—a perfect fifth (=seven semitones, hence t7)—as the interval separating the arabesques from one another: additional evidence that the original set was the conceptual point of departure (and implying that the "transport" begins already some way off the ground). The notes that sandwich the Eschbeg set at the extremities of each arabesque are also motivically significant. As indicated in parentheses at the end of each line of Ex. 6-7, the final note of each arabesque, transposed to the pitch level of the original set, supplies the note corresponding to the composer's first initial, *A*, making the signature more complete ("A. Sch[ön]be[r]g"). And the beginning notes of each arabesque, defining the ascent by fifths, together comprise a transposition of the opening phrase in the voice part *(Ich fühle Duft...*, Ex. 6-8), calculated so that if the two four-note groups are laid side by side, an unbroken series of ascending fifths is the result, suggesting a direct continuation by the voice of the spiritual ascent announced by the strings:

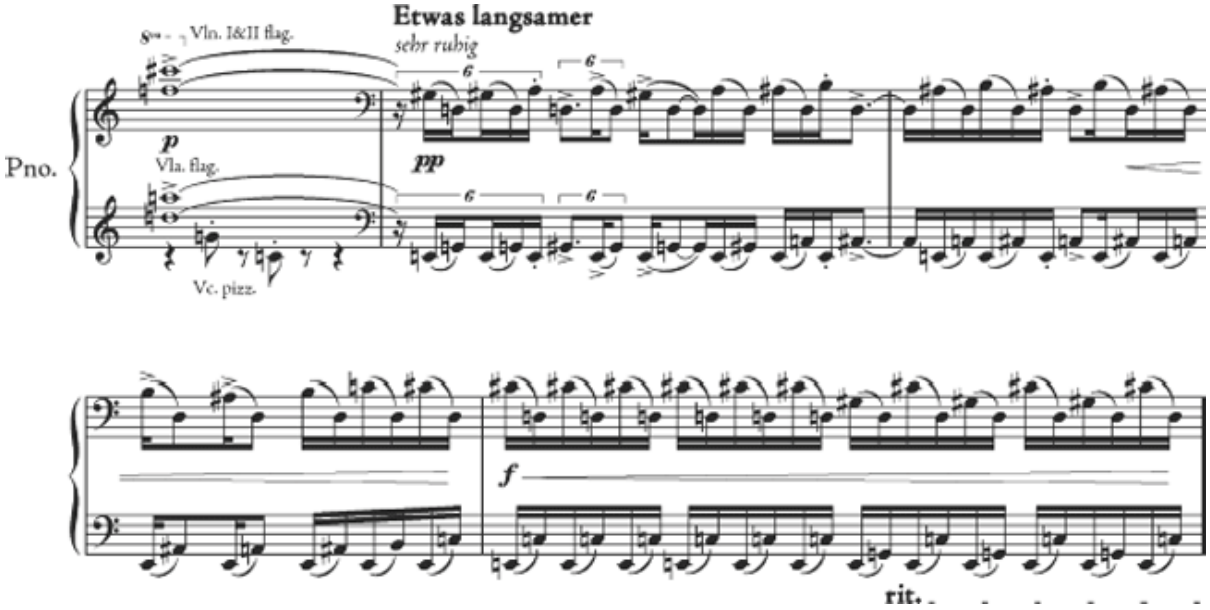
(Strings)|(Voice)

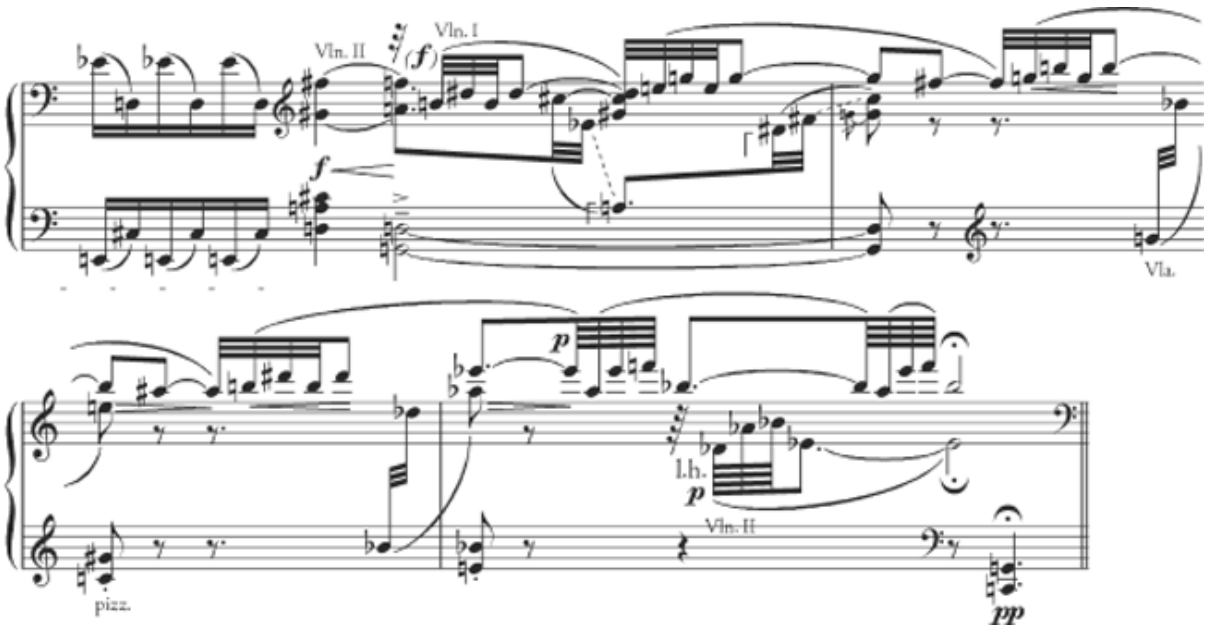
G♯A♭–D♯E♭–B♭–F–|–C–G–D–A

In the third measure, the four-note group to the left of the vertical line, consisting of the respective opening pitches of the four string arabesques, is turned into an explicit motive in the "left hand" staff of Berg's keyboard transcription (Ex. 6-9). It is sequentially repeated there three times (the last sequential repetition falling one note short—note well which note!—of completion). Three measures later it is back for another sequential treatment, in diminution and "permuted" (that is, with its pitches presented in a different order: E♭–A♭–(E♭)–F–B♭ instead of F–E♭–A♭–B♭). In m. 9 (left-hand staff) it is transposed for the first time to the pitches-/C–G–D–A/- on which the voice will eventually make its entrance (Ex. 6-10).



ex. 6-9 Arnold Schoenberg, Quartet no. 2, IV (*Entrückung*), arr. Berg, mm. 3–6





ex. 6-10 Arnold Schoenberg, Quartet no. 2, IV (*Entrückung*), arr. Berg, mm. 9–15

Is the music "atonal"? Ex. 6-10 seems to say no. The cello's G and C pizzicati under the sustained D–A fifth in the viola in m. 9 are expanded into sustained bass fifths (G–D in m. 13 and C–G at the end of m. 15) that fairly scream "Cadence!" But the very necessity of "screaming" in this context underscores the arbitrariness of the cadential gesture. The big V–I in C, like the "big Five-Ones" in Mahler's Second, seem to be little more than a "terminating convenience"[16] (to borrow a term from the music analyst Pieter van den Toorn), rather than a true functional "outcome" of the music that preceded it.

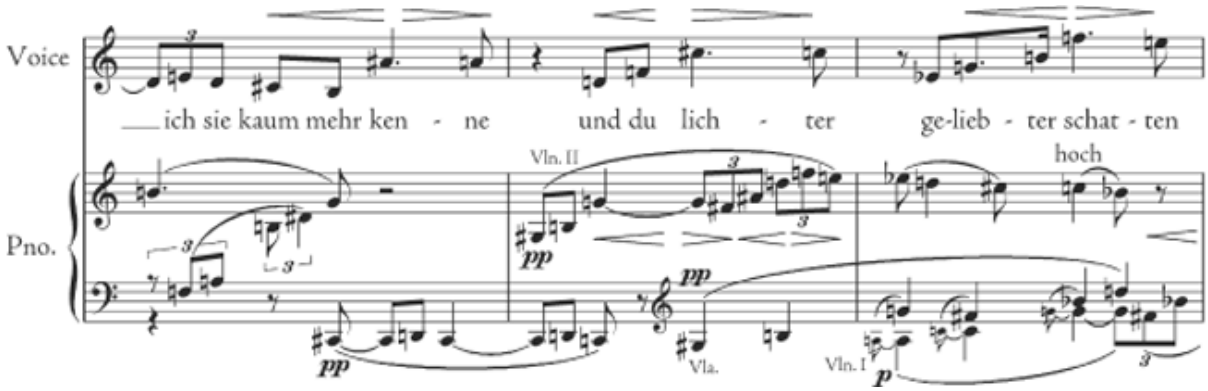
Elsewhere, despite the ample use of the circle of fifths (a "tonal" mainstay if ever there was one), the sense of tonal function (or of tonal "attraction") is attenuated to what seems the vanishing point. For one thing, the circles of fifths tend to go in the "wrong" direction—not the centripetal "V–I" direction but the other way, centrifugally, as if perpetually seeking the next dominant. For another thing, the circle is "real," as the language of fugue writing would put it, rather than "tonal." That is, all the fifths are perfect, so that the implied complete circle is closed not after a diatonic seven progressions but a full chromatic twelve. For a third, until m. 13 no tone is allowed to assume the function of a dominant root. The B♯ that might have functioned as a leading tone over the initial G♯ in Ex. 6-6 is withheld from the first arabesque. Not until the crest of the second arabesque does it appear (spelled as C); and, as a note-count will verify, it is the twelfth pitch class out of twelve to arrive, so that there is little chance of the ear's connecting it with the initial G♯ in any harmonically functional manner.

Finally, and this is particularly interesting, when the C finally arrives toward the end of the second arabesque in Ex. 6-6, the ear has likely been conditioned by the first arabesque to interpret the note as an appoggiatura rather than a potentially functional "harmonic tone." How is that possible in a harmonically "functionless" context? Simply by the rhythm and contour of the melodic writing, which apes the shape of an appoggiatura—a leap from upbeat to downbeat, landing on a tone that moves by step in the direction opposite to the leap.

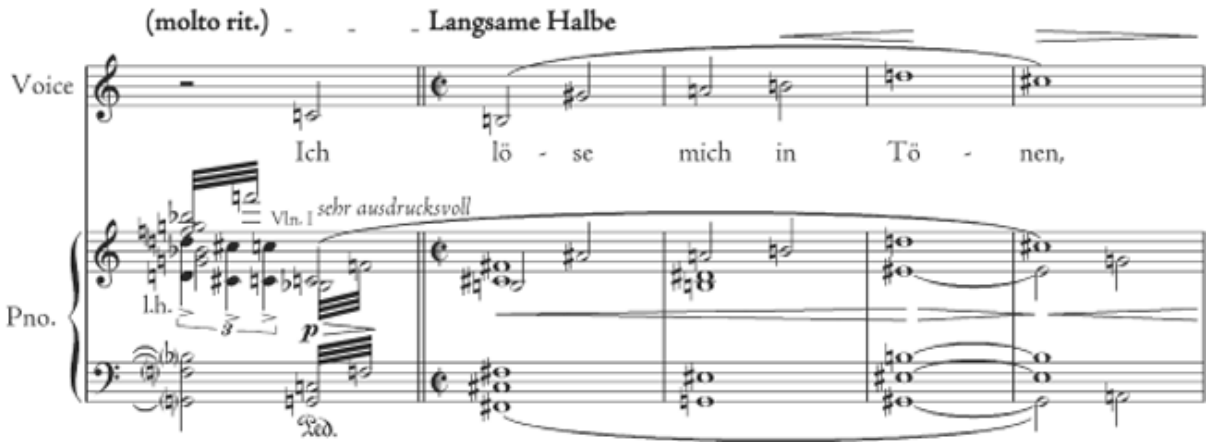
The music that formed the immediate historical background to Schoenberg's expressionistic idiom was particularly rich in expressive appoggiaturas (or *Seufzer*, "sighs"—look back at Ex. 1-7, from the Adagio in Mahler's Tenth!), and it is clear that Schoenberg intended such associations to remain in force. His radical style very effectively demonstrates the extent to which melodic shapes may continue to suggest local, quite conventional harmonic implications even in the absence of explicit harmonic functions—or rather, it demonstrates the extent to which our listening is always laden with unconsciously learned (or "picked-up") theory that the canny composer (who has also picked it up) is free to exploit. The question "tonal or atonal?"

is thus not only a question about composing methods. It is also a question about listening habits and strategies.

The voice part, too, is riddled with appoggiaturas—even more conventionally expressive in the presence of a text. Measures 38, 39, and 40 all contain "sigh" figures to enhance the emotional impact of the poet's rueful appeal to "thou radiant, beloved specter, caller-forth of all my anguish" (Ex. 6-11a). There is an ineluctable sense that the A♯, C♯, and F resolve respectively to A, C, and E as dissonance resolves to consonance, even in the absence of any confirmation from the actual harmony. And then, in mm. 54–55 (Ex. 6-11b), all at once there is confirmation. The resolution of D to C♯ establishes a dominant chord just as it would in Mahler or Strauss: it is as if Schoenberg were twisting a dial to bring the key of F♯ in and out of focus.

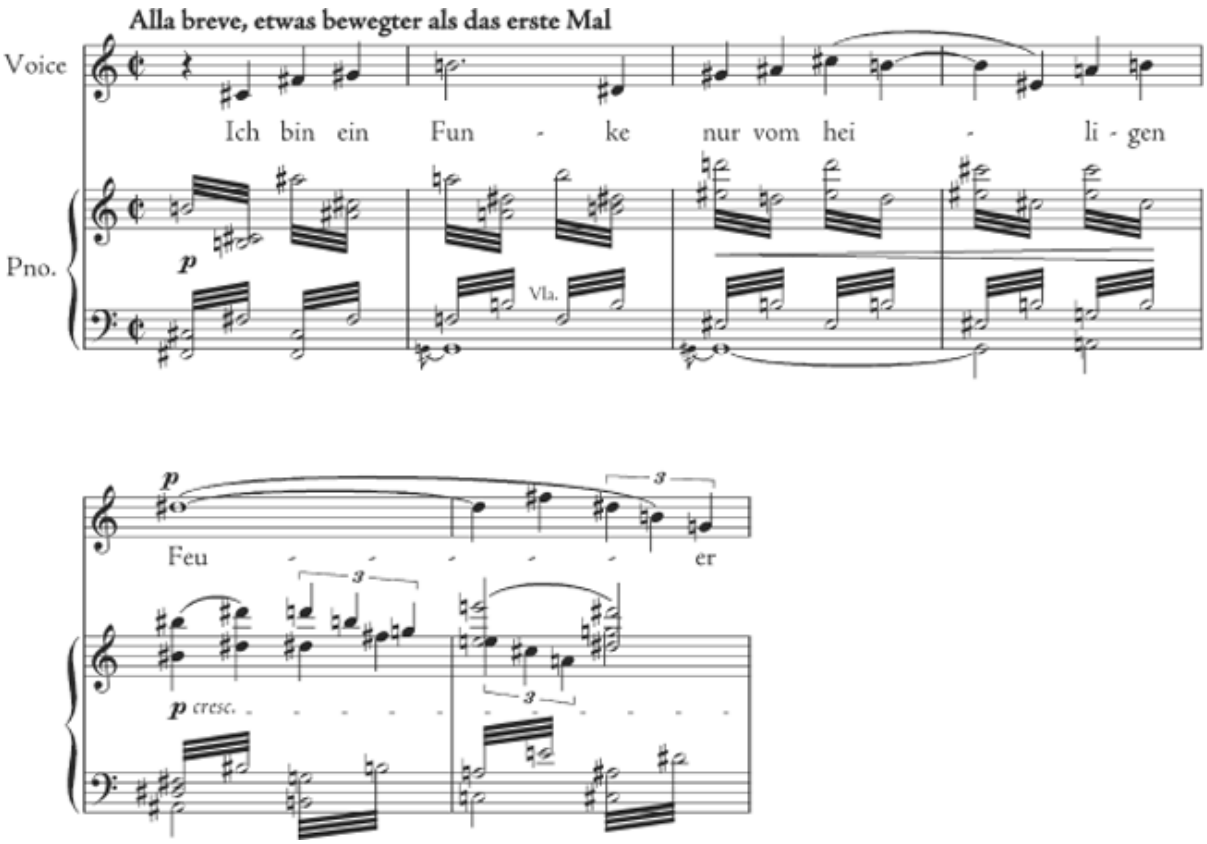


ex. 6-11a Arnold Schoenberg, Quartet no. 2, IV (*Entrückung*), arr. Berg, mm. 38–40



ex. 6-11b Arnold Schoenberg, Quartet no. 2, IV (*Entrückung*), arr. Berg, mm. 51–55

The coda, which begins with the voice repeating its opening motive in agreement with a shimmering F♯ major triad (Ex. 6-12), is kept pretty well in focus by the use of tonic and dominant pedals. The movement, in its implied progression from tonal indefiniteness to regained definition, demonstrates the location of "tonality" and "atonality" on a contextual continuum, and the impossibility of drawing a categorical line between them. Even when there is no obvious return to "functionality," Schoenberg's expressionistic music often ends with unmistakable cadential gestures, usually involving half-step progressions that continue, just as they had been doing in Mahler and Strauss, to provide (on a "local" if not a "global" level) a sense of tonal motion and closure.



ex. 6-12 Arnold Schoenberg, Quartet no. 2, IV (*Entrückung*), arr. Berg, mm. 100–105

Notes:

(16) Pieter van den Toorn, *The Music of Igor Stravinsky* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 332.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

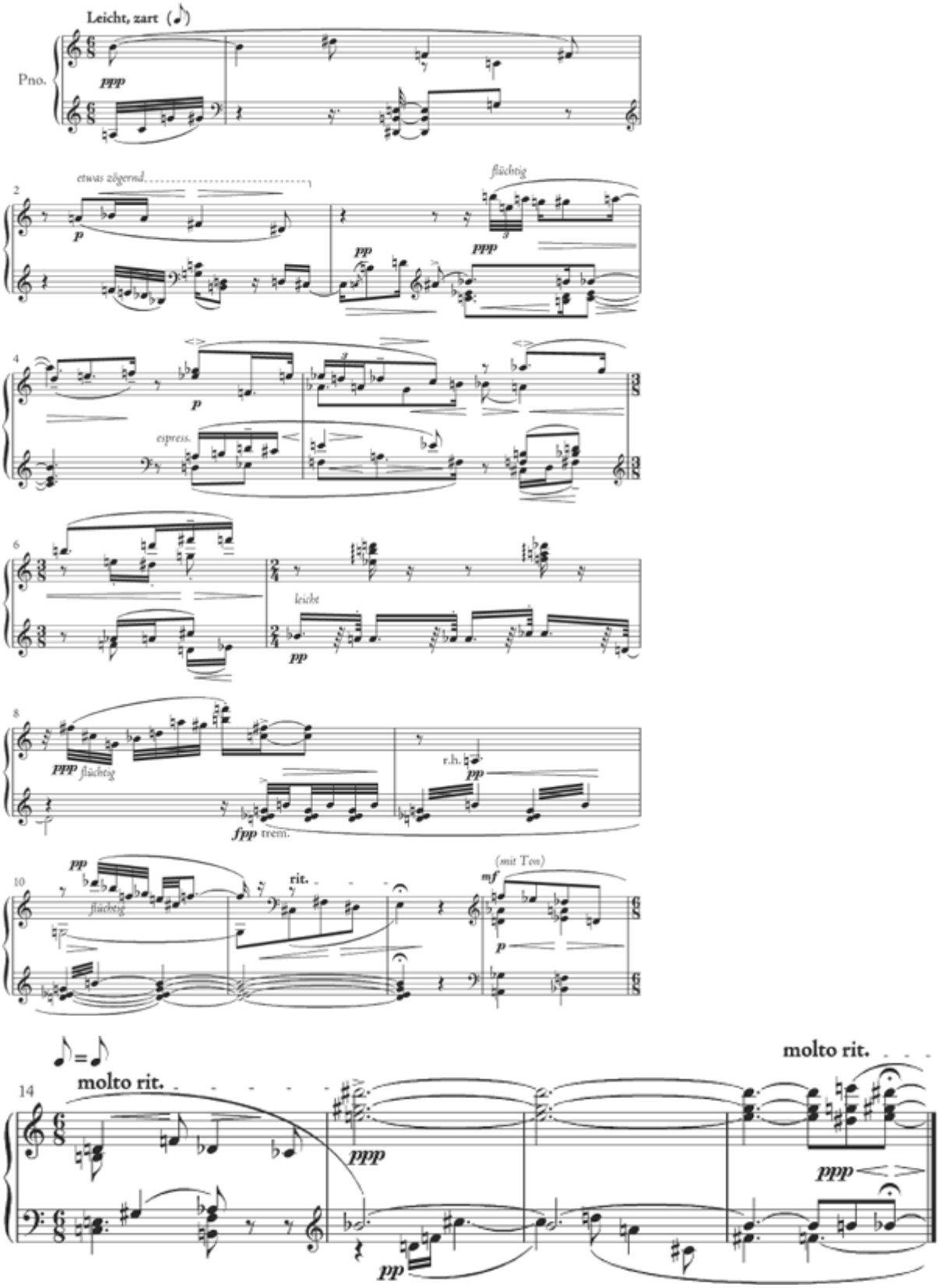
See also from Grove Music Online
Arnold Schoenberg

A LITTLE “SET THEORY”

Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

For a final demonstration we can turn to the first of Schoenberg's *Sechs kleine Klavierstücke*, op. 19 (“Six little pieces for piano,” 1911), a set of tiny, aphoristic piano pieces in an idiom that finally seems purged of all “tonal reference” (Ex. 6-13). No single pitch emerges from the texture with sufficient frequency to suggest itself as a candidate tonic; fifth relations are not salient; major or minor triads are not in evidence, nor are dominant-seventh chords. It would appear that the whole conventional vocabulary of music has been suppressed in favor of a private language.

And yet even if a familiar vocabulary is missing, there still remain vestiges of a familiar syntax. There are significantly recurring harmonies: both in the middle of m. 3 and on the downbeat of m. 5 are chords that could be cumbersomely described (in “tonal” terms) as a minor seventh chord without a fifth and with a major seventh along with the minor seventh. In m. 5 the four notes are F–A♭–E♭–E while the corresponding notes in m. 3 are C–E♭–B♭–B (the last note being the first in the right-hand melodic figure that enters after a sixteenth rest). The same harmony, expressed as an arpeggio or melodic succession, is also heard at the very beginning of the piece in the left hand.



ex. 6-13 Arnold Schoenberg, *Sechs kleine Klavierstücke*, Op. 19, no. 1

A similar example comes in the middle of m. 2, where we find a distinctive chord—a tritone atop a perfect fourth—that we have already encountered in Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*, where it was so prevalent that we ended up calling it the *Rite*-chord. Its appearance in m. 2 is prefigured as the harmonic sum, so to speak, of the last three notes in m. 1 (the F♯, interestingly, being the upward resolution of a downward-leaping

appoggiatura). As an arpeggio, it reappears at the beginning of m. 8 in inverted form, the tritone now below the perfect fourth rather than above. Note, too, that the right-hand triplet at the beginning of m. 5 consists of the same intervals compressed into the “best normal order”: flip the E♭ and D into a seventh, put the A in the middle, and the result is another *Rite*-chord.

For a third example, compare the three-note chord in the left hand in m. 1 with the long-sustained chord in the right hand that lasts from the downbeat of m. 15 virtually to the end of the piece. It may not be immediately apparent that the one is the intervallic inversion of the other, but putting both chords into “best normal order” will make their relationship clear. The closest possible spacing of the notes in the first chord is B–D♯–E, a major third beneath a semitone; a similar operation at measure 15 produces D♯–E–G♯, a semitone beneath a major third. And once we have noticed this much, we can notice the many transposed occurrences of the same harmony (or “intervallic set”): the first arpeggiated right-hand chord in m. 7, the three right-hand thirty-second notes in m. 8 (B♭–D–A) that follow the arpeggiated *Rite*-chord we have already noted, and so on.

One could go on noting correspondences like these almost indefinitely. Sometimes they resemble traditional contrapuntal devices: in m. 2, for example, the right hand melody (or rather its descending component) is mirrored in diminution by the thirty-seconds in the left hand. At other times they are purely harmonic: at the end of m. 5 (left hand) and in m. 7 (right hand) an augmented triad is the second chord in a pair, suggesting a cadential approach. Elsewhere (m. 3, left hand; last measure, both hands) multiple neighbors suggest cadences, just as they had done in early songs like *Erwartung* and *Der Wanderer*, now even in the absence of a tonic. One might even go so far as to suggest that the use of multiple neighbors lends the final chord in the piece the de facto status of a tonic even though it is not (as Schoenberg often put it) a “codified” harmony.

Contextual relationships like these arise, to use Schoenberg's own expression, from “working with the tones of a motive”[17] —that is, a group of notes with a distinctive intervallic profile. But the relation ships we have been tracing, while numerous and cumulatively impressive, are not the whole story, or even the most significant part of it. The story as it stands shows Schoenberg working, even in a piece of only seventeen measures’ duration, with a great many scattered motives. What justifies such a procedure if we assume (as anyone coming out of the intellectual and artistic traditions in which Schoenberg’s style developed would have had to assume) that a piece of music should be “all of a piece”? Is there any principle by which all the scattered observations we have been making can be related?

For an answer, look once again at the chord in the middle of m. 3 (C–E♭–B♭–B), one of the first musical events we noted in taking the piece apart. If we refer it to Ex. 6-5, from Schoenberg’s *Mädchenlied*, op. 6, no. 3 (a “tonal” song in E minor), we may note, to our possible surprise, that all of its tones are found there. And that means (if we recall the significance of Ex. 6-5 in the argument of this chapter) that all its tones belong to the “Eschbeg set,” Schoenberg’s musical signature. They are, in fact, the first four notes of the set with their order rearranged (as 2–1–4–3). And if we continue to survey the right-hand melody in m. 3, we encounter all the remaining tones, even including the A that provides the composer’s first initial, so that the set assumes its complete “A. Schbeg” form.

The implications of this observation are far-reaching. To begin with, all of the relationships we have traced to the chord in m. 3—the chord in m. 5, the left-hand melodic phrase at the very outset—are likewise traceable (through transposition) to the “A. Schbeg” (or “Aschbeg”) set. And that also means that any other group of tones that can be derived as a transposed or untransposed subset from the “Aschbeg” set are related (or at least “relatable”) to all the other ones. That includes virtually all the musical configurations we have noted. They are all related to one another, if the “Aschbeg” set is regarded as the nexus.

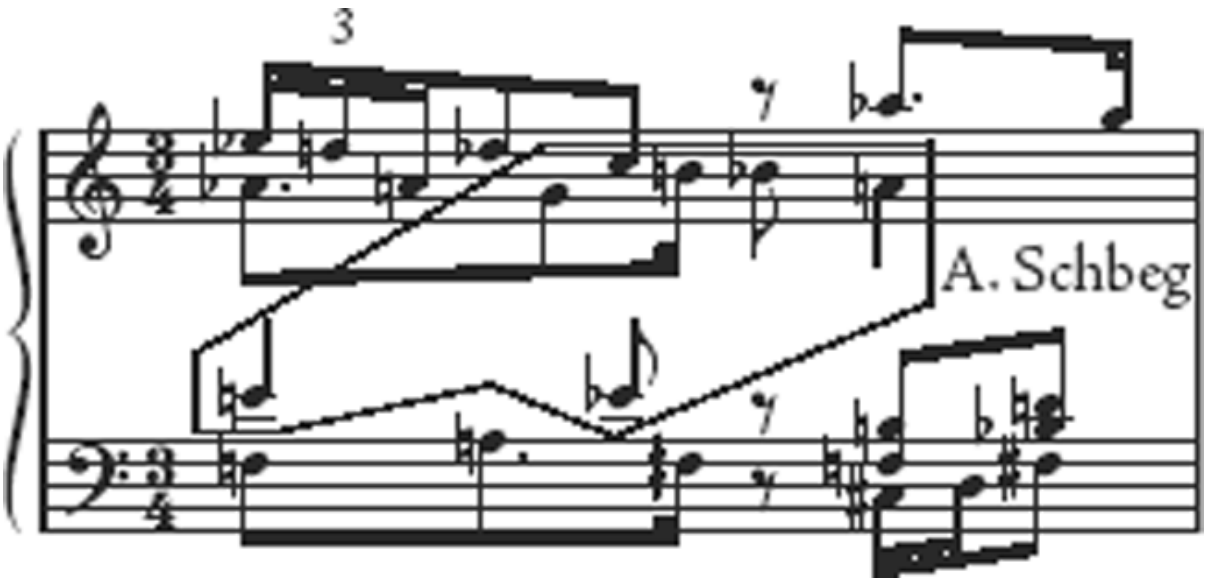
To demonstrate this we have to put the “A. Schbeg” set in its “best normal order.” In the order of Schoenberg’s name the constituent tones are A–E♭–C–B–B♭–E–G. The closest possible spacing of these tones is G–A–B♭–B–C–E♭–E. If we call G “zero” and count by semitones, the Aschbeg set looks like this: /0 2 3 4 5 8 9/. Now we are ready to compare the other pitch configurations we have noted to the Aschbeg set. The fourth-tritone configuration, noted in m. 1, m. 2, and m. 8 (among other occurrences) reduces to /0 1 6/. This configuration can be “mapped” onto the numerical form of the Aschbeg set by adding 2 to each of its

members: /2 3 8/. Each of the resulting numbers can be found in the Aschbeg set.

This can easily be put in more familiar musical terms. All that the numbers really mean is that if you start on the A (= 2), you can construct a fourth-tritone chord out of the notes of the Aschbeg set: A–B♭–E♭, which if spaced B♭–E♭–A is an exact transposition of the chord in m. 3. Similarly, the third + semitone configuration that we traced in m. 1 (left hand) and m. 15 (right hand), when placed in best normal order (/0 1 5/), can be mapped onto the Aschbeg set by adding 3: /3 4 8/(the numbers corresponding to B♭–B–Eb, a transposition of the D♯–E–G♯ in m. 15).

Did Schoenberg do all this “math”? Of course not. He needed only to have the Aschbeg set in mind as his starting point, select subsets from it, and transpose them as he wished. It is we who need the math to demonstrate (or at least plausibly propose) the first premise, namely that Schoenberg had the Aschbeg set in mind as his starting point. There are other ways of showing (or proposing) this as well. The piece actually begins with a very slightly modified Aschbeg set, consisting of the first two notes in the right hand and the left-hand part up to the three-note chord we have already analyzed from another perspective. The sum of all these pitches is “Aschbeg” minus the B♭, and with a G♯ in its place. The G♯ is not really as much of a deviation as it may seem. Its enharmonic equivalent, A♭, is “As” in German: the first two letters of Aschbeg.

There are at least two more complete Aschbegs embedded in the music of op. 19, no. 1. The left-hand part of m. 7, plus the pickup at the end of m. 6 and the first right hand note in m. 8, amounts to Aschbeg transposed down a semitone. The most hidden or “occult” occurrence of the set is found in m. 5. It needs to be illustrated with an example, since it crosscuts three of the polyphonic voices delineated in Schoenberg’s notation. It should be emphasized, though, lest anyone suspect it to be fortuitous, that the pitches involved are all contiguous (see Ex. 6-14).



ex. 6-14 “Aschbeg” set in Arnold Schoenberg, *Sechs kleine Klavierstücke*, Op. 19, no. 1, m. 5

Notes:

(17) Schoenberg, “Composition with Twelve Tones (II)” (1948); *Style and Idea*, p. 248.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Grundgestalt

GRUNDGESTALT

Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Never before have we devoted so much space to analyzing so little music. It was a necessary extravagance, matching the extravagant intricacy of the composition. That intricacy was mandated by Schoenberg's famously contradictory aims, according to which a spontaneous impression had to be undergirded by a very deliberate, even cerebral, process of control. On the one hand, Schoenberg aimed to compose "expressionistically," as if by primitive instinct, avoiding all trace of established or uncritically accepted routine; and on the other, he felt a strong obligation to compose "responsibly," unifying his composition "organically," according to the standards set by the masters he revered. The result was an "athematic" music, as Schoenberg called it, in which there were no obvious tunes—and no obvious "received" formal design—on the musical surface, but in which there was a teeming "subcutaneous" profusion of complex motivic work.

What unified the composition was no longer a theme in the traditional sense but what Schoenberg called the *Grundgestalt* or "basic shape": a motivic complex that could serve as a source or quarry for everything that happened in the composition (or at least everything that happened in the pitch dimension). All melodic shapes, all harmonies, all contrapuntal textures were to be derived from it by the composer—and therefore, at least theoretically, deducible through analysis, which thus constitutes a test of the composer's success (or, even more strongly, of his ethics).

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Expressionism

Erwartung

Salome

PSYCHOLOGICAL REALISM

Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

So there we have some more questions to be repressed for the time being, while we delve further into Schoenberg's repulsive yet fascinating psychological terrain. The word "repulsive" here is not an esthetic judgment but (as the epigraph atop this chapter already suggests) a statement of fact. The use of art—sometimes didactically, sometimes voyeuristically—to explore what was ugly or obnoxious was another long-standing project that expressionism brought to a head; and it should come as no surprise that Schoenberg's most extreme essay in the expressionist vein should have been a portrait of a sexually obsessed madwoman to set alongside counterparts in Wagner and Strauss and vastly outstrip them.

In creating it, Schoenberg brought musical expressionism to its Far Out Point—which in effect meant bringing German romanticism itself to its final shriek. Considering that for a century or more art had been defined as inherently romantic, and music as the most essentially romantic of the arts, the magnitude of Schoenberg's achievement—or at least of his attempt—has to be regarded as "historic." It is what won for Schoenberg his devoted disciples and his enormous authority, and also what insured that his name would remain a lightning rod for controversy second only to Wagner's.

Schoenberg's madwoman was the protagonist of a twenty-five-minute "mono-drama"—a one-act opera with a single character—that he composed, at white heat, between 27 August and 12 September 1909. Like the early song through which we first encountered Schoenberg's name (and very likely in tribute to it) the opera was called *Erwartung*, "Expectancy." But whereas the early song, in keeping with the fashion of its time, described an expectation (and gave a foretaste) of sensual pleasure, the new opera, subtitled *Angsttraum*, or "Nightmare," depicted a prolonged foreboding of psychic horror, the kind of maximalized emotional tension without hope of relief for which only "emancipated dissonance"—dissonance with no possibility of resolution—seemed capable of providing an adequate symbolic medium.

Like the exiled Wagner some sixty years before, Schoenberg achieved this aggressive technical and expressive breakthrough in creative isolation, not to say seclusion. Like *The Ring*, *Erwartung* had to wait many years for its first performance, which took place in Prague (by then no longer in Austria but the capital of Czechoslovakia) in 1924—all of which further enhanced Schoenberg's prophetic aura and gave the music, when finally heard, the force of revelation to its devotees.

The weird libretto was of a sort no established writer of the time would have agreed to write. It was composed at Schoenberg's request by a family friend of the Zemlinskys named Marie Pappenheim (1882–1966), an avocational poet who had recently come to Vienna from Pressburg (now Bratislava in Slovakia) to study medicine, eventually becoming a well-known dermatologist. The disjointed, often ungrammatical monologue she came up with has often been compared with the sort of emotionally overwrought running babble an "analysand" or patient in psychoanalysis might utter from the couch in "free association."

That was surely no coincidence. Marie Pappenheim's brother, the psychiatrist Martin Pappenheim, was an

early follower of Freud, and her cousin Bertha Pappenheim was the notorious "Anna O.," arguably the first analysand. A patient of Josef Breuer, Freud's mentor and early collaborator, Bertha Pappenheim underwent a celebrated but later bitterly contested cure from hysteria by means of hypnosis and "recovered memory." Whether true memories or merely fantasies and hallucinations produced through hypnotic and autohypnotic suggestion, the therapeutic results of Bertha Pappenheim's "talking cure," when written up by her therapist in "The Case of Anna O.," were a medical and literary sensation. It was the ongoing (indeed, still-raging) controversy over the reliability of hypnotically induced results that led Freud to modify the method so as to replace hypnosis with the fully conscious talk therapy known as free association.

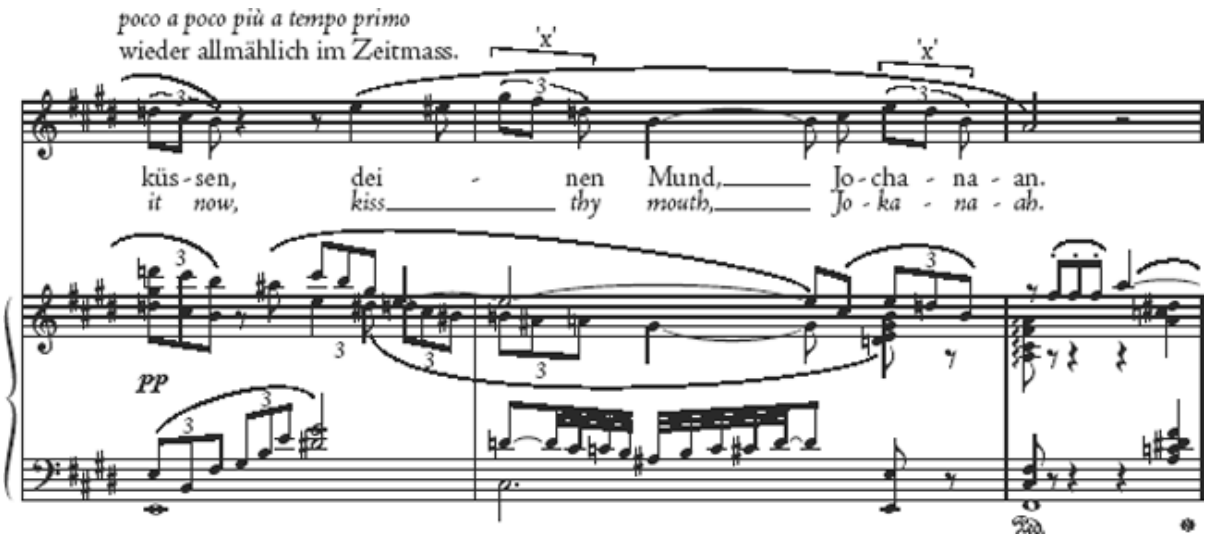
But it was precisely the ambiguity of psychic phenomena, the impossibility of distinguishing with certainty between recalled (or even lived) experience and fantasy, the very pitfall that compromised the "Case of Anna O." scientifically, that Marie Pappenheim now sought to exploit artistically in the libretto she fashioned for Schoenberg. Its dramatic situation is simplicity itself; the ramifications to which it leads are unfathomable. A woman (nameless, like most characters in expressionist drama) finds herself at the edge of a wood, anxiously looking for her lover. At the end of the opera she stumbles on his corpse and immediately begins a jealous rant that leaves us wondering whether she has murdered him.

The whole drama consists of her "inner occurrences," as Schoenberg would say, a compound of immediate sensation, memory, fantasy, and hallucination. At the end, as in contemporary literary experiments with the "stream of consciousness," we are left to wonder whether what we have witnessed is "real," a dream, or a psychotic symptom. (In keeping with this irreality and uncertainty the Metropolitan Opera in New York once staged *Erwartung* with a set that contained, in addition to the phantasmagorical moonlit forest, a grand piano to suggest that perhaps the distraught protagonist had never left her parlor—or else perhaps that, stumbling through the real forest, she imagines herself all the while at home.)

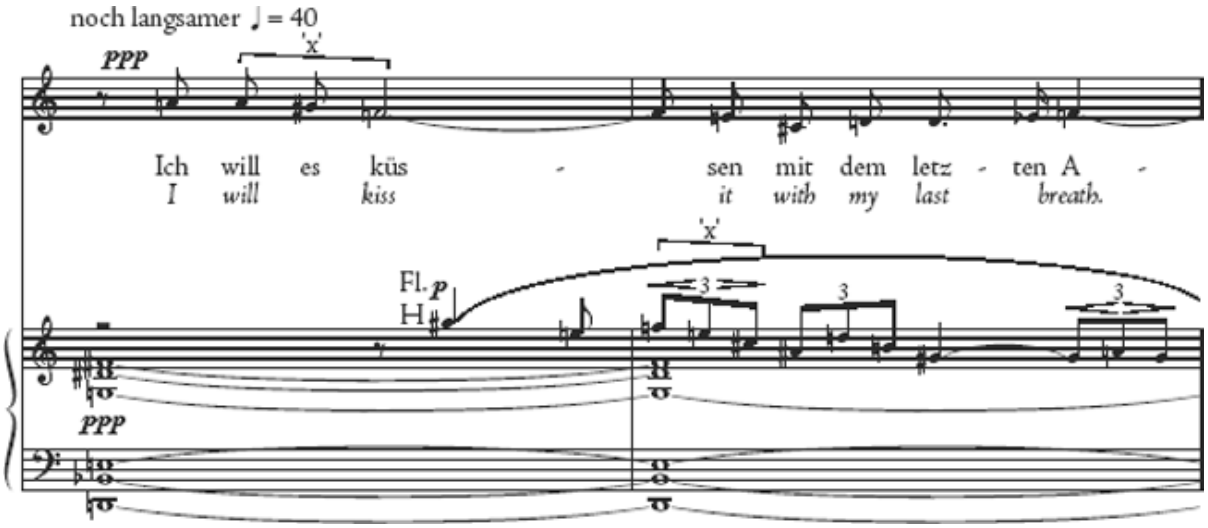
Like the other fin-de-siècle madwomen we have met, Schoenberg's "Frau" symbolized, in her violent loss of emotional control, the imagined consequences of the stresses to which modern civilization subjects its members, and also the displaced response of men threatened by the emancipation of the weaker sex. Thus, like most fin-de-siècle art (and like psychoanalysis, for that matter), it expressed a crucial ambivalence, using a radically innovative approach, and a vocabulary of extreme modernity, in order to critique, or even indict, the modern world.

The indictment was much stronger than before. Previous manifestations of the madwoman theme, whether in the operas of Strauss or the ballets of Stravinsky, had camouflaged it with the exotic trappings of antiquity (classical, biblical, primitive), enhancing its voyeuristic allure and distancing it from its uncomfortable contemporary relevance. Schoenberg and Pappenheim gave it a raw, unvarnished treatment that laid its social and psychological message bare. Neither Stravinsky's Chosen One nor Strauss's title characters have any interior life. They are not "subjects." We see them act, we witness their drives and compulsions, but we are not privy to their reflections. (Indeed, it would have contradicted the whole primitivist assumption to allow the Chosen One to have any such thing as a reflection.) Schoenberg's madwoman is nothing but reflection; we are left unsure whether indeed she has an external life to match her inner turmoil. Her intense subjectivity coupled with her namelessness allows her to represent both an autonomous contemporary psyche in all its unfathomable complexity, and an archetypal Every(wo)man. Through the prism of Schoenberg's opera, *Salome* and *The Rite of Spring* themselves assume a clearer focus as cultural symptoms.

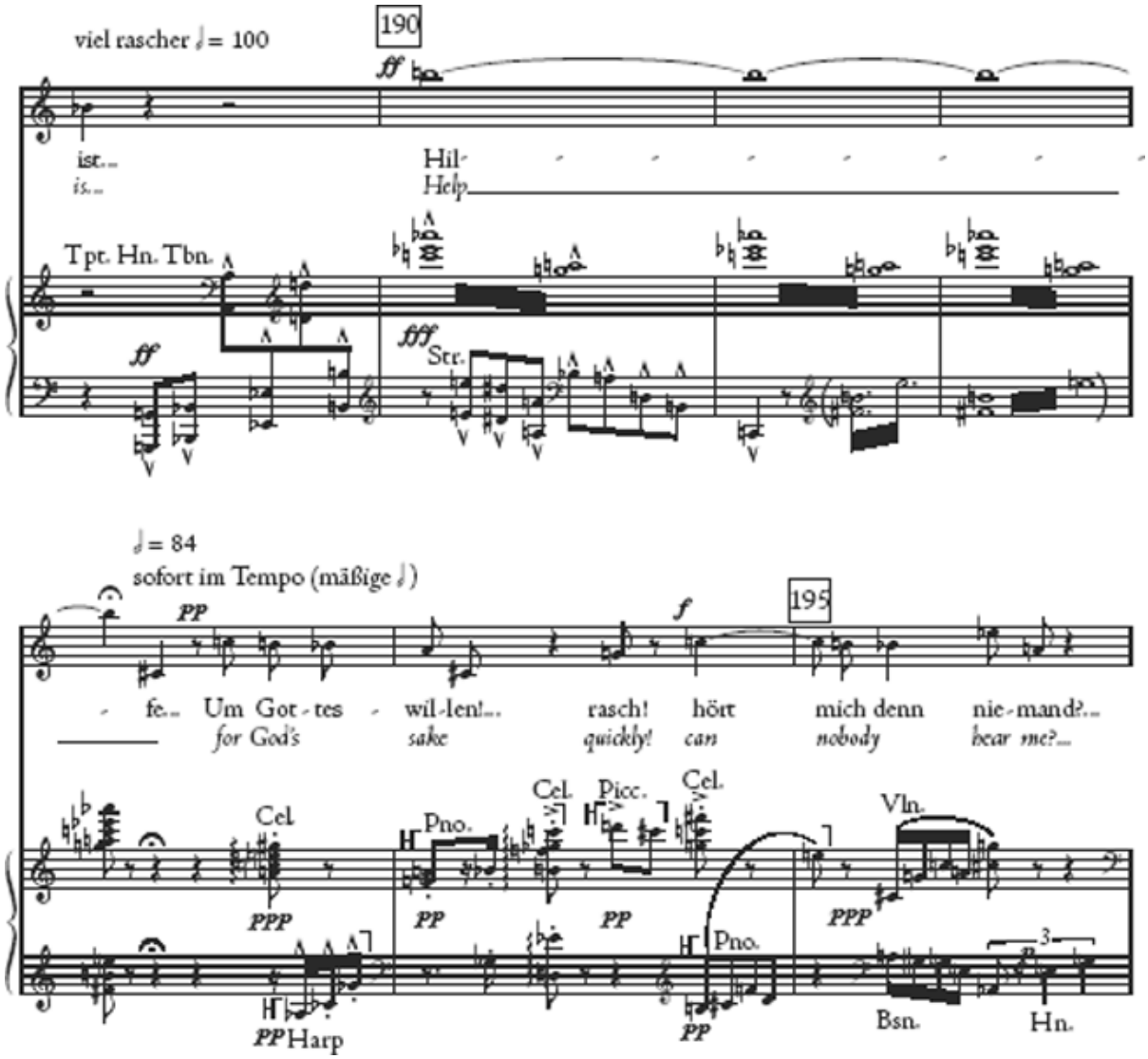
Indeed, Schoenberg made the parallels between his opera and its German antecedents inescapable. Where the woman imagines kissing her dead lover, Schoenberg forces the listener to recall Strauss's necrophiliac Salome (Ex. 6-15). And when she lets out the one word—"Help!"—that she unambiguously speaks (or shrieks) aloud rather than to herself, Schoenberg literally quotes a similar frenzied moment from the part of Kundry, the madwoman in Wagner's *Parsifal* and the progenitor of the whole fin-de-siècle line (Ex. 6-16).



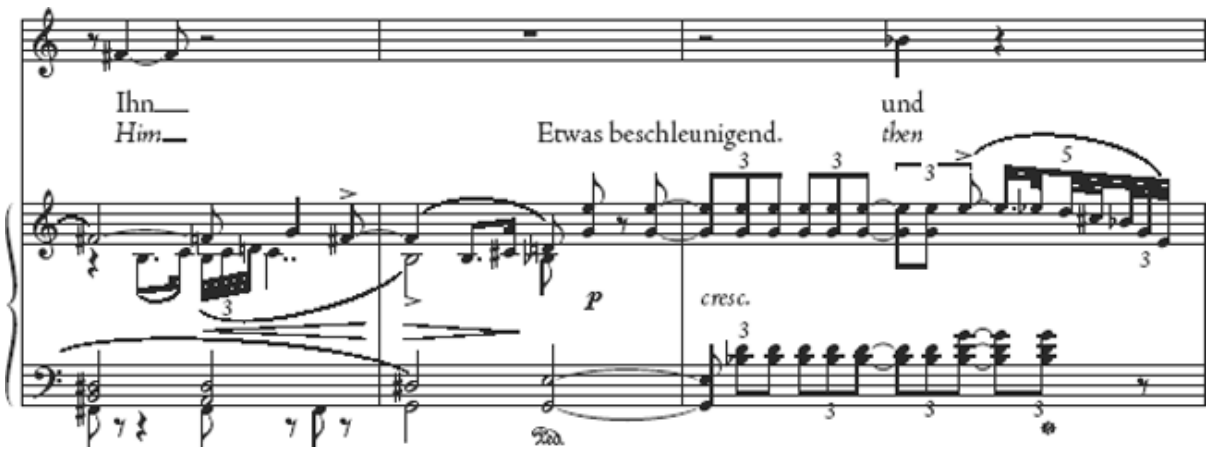
ex. 6-15a Richard Strauss, *Salome*, mm. 319–320

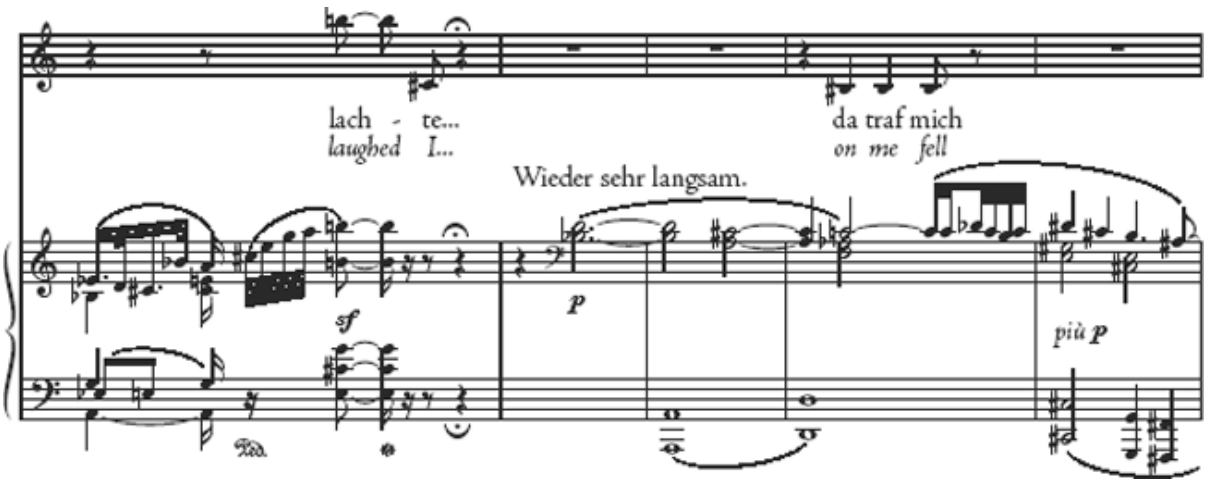


ex. 6-15b Arnold Schoenberg, *Erwartung*, mm. 263–264



ex. 6-16a Arnold Schoenberg, *Erwartung*, mm. 190–195





ex. 6-16b Richard Wagner, *Parsifal*, Act II, "Lachte!"

The scenario consists of four scenes separated by little orchestral interludes during which the singer leaves and re-enters the stage. They are chiefly distinguished from one another, again in a manner typical of expressionist theater, by lighting effects. The first scene is bathed in moonlight; the second takes place in "blackest darkness." The third has a split stage (one side dark, the other moonlit), and the last is illuminated in multicolored light. They can be taken as representations of states of consciousness (Freud's conscious "ego" vs. the unconscious "id"). It is during the "black" second scene that the woman has a presentiment of the grisly end, mistaking a log in her path for the dead body she will find (although she is not yet consciously aware of the presentiment). All of this, moreover, can be taken as a metaphor of music itself—or at least of Schoenberg's music, if we remember his avowal to Kandinsky that art must express the instinctive and the inborn, the part of ourselves that is wholly unconscious and uncorrupted by convention.

But how "unconscious" is the music that represents this instinctive or reflex state? Webern, Schoenberg's devoted pupil and spokesman, insisted that, as a representation of unconscious and irrational thought, *Erwartung* contained no thematic repetitions or developments—that is, nothing of musical "logic." Both in its flow of pitches and rhythms and in its coloring, the work represented, in Webern's view

> an uninterrupted succession of sounds never before heard; there is no measure of this score that fails to display a completely new sound-picture, and so this music flows onward, giving expression to the most hidden and slightest impulses of the emotions.[18]

This description has set the tone for many others, and for ever more extravagant claims, such as the music theorist Robert Morgan's contention that the speed with which Schoenberg composed *Erwartung* suggests that the opera in all its complexity of design "surfaced directly—without intervention of conscious control—from the composer's innermost subliminal thought processes," and that the music therefore "almost completely defies rational musical analysis."[19]

These remarks exemplify the hyperbole that has always surrounded Schoenberg's achievement, itself a testimony to its benchmark-setting maximalism. And yet a close look at virtually any measure of the score will tell another story—the story already implied by our analysis of the tiny piano piece, op. 19, no. 1, but projected on a vast scale. What made it possible for Schoenberg to compose his opera so quickly, as that close look will immediately disclose, was an extremely high degree of melodic and harmonic consistency. The material out of which *Erwartung* was assembled, though often tendentiously characterized by the composer and his disciples as a sea of possibilities even more limitless than Wagner's, turns out to have been in fact quite limited, as effective composing always demands. In other words, the composer created his own rules but then followed them scrupulously.

Notes:

(18) Anton Webern, “Schönberg’s Musik,” in Alban Berg, et al., *Arnold Schönberg* (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1912); quoted in John C. Crawford and Dorothy L. Crawford, *Expressionism in Twentieth-Century Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 79–80.

(19) Robert P. Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music*, p. 73.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Arnold Schoenberg

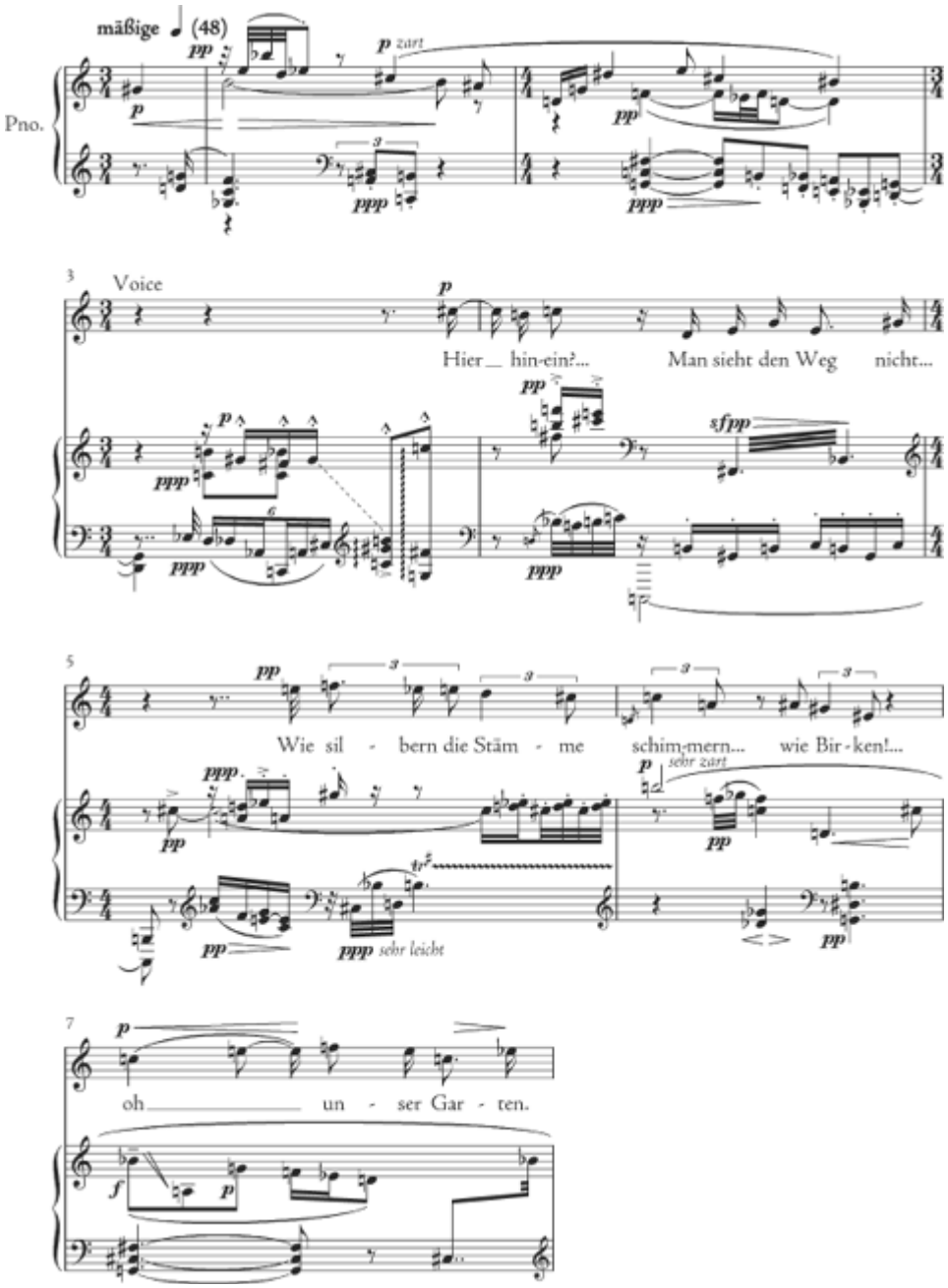
Atonality

ATONAL TRIADS

Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

To demonstrate this, we need only take a melodic and harmonic inventory of the opening measures (Ex. 6-17) and spot-check the rest. And our inventory will start right off with something familiar. The very first harmony in the score, consisting of the three notes played before the first bar (a melodic quarter-note upbeat in the bassoon and an accompanying fourth that comes in on the last sixteenth), turns out to be an inversion of the same *Rite*-chord we have already spotted in the little piano piece, and which can be sighted in any number of early Schoenberg scores. (Transpose the accompanying fourth up an octave, as in Ex. 6-18a, so that it is above the bassoon's G♯ rather than below it, and the more familiar voicing of fourth + tritone will appear.)

The harmony is just as pervasive in *Erwartung* as it had been in *The Rite*. It is Schoenberg's basic harmonic building block, in fact, providing his music with a sonic norm much as the triad had always done in "common-practice" harmony. So from now on it will make some sense to call it the "atonal triad," not only because of its prevalence but also in reference to its structure. Just as the triad is a superimposition of thirds, so this chord is a superimposition of fourths; and just as triads may superimpose thirds of the same kind or of different kinds, so can "fourth-chords." When the thirds in a triad are of different kinds, moreover, the harmony can be inverted: the difference between the major and minor triads in common practice is defined according to whether the major third is below or above the minor third. Similarly, atonal triads like Schoenberg's can be inverted according to whether the augmented fourth is below or above the perfect fourth. And just as ordinary triads can be extended by "stacking" more thirds atop the basic pair to make seventh and ninth chords, and so forth, so the atonal triad may be extended by stacking alternating perfect and augmented fourths above the basic pair. We have already seen this happen (and seen it extended to the maximum) in the sketches for Ives's *Universe Symphony* (Fig. 5-6).

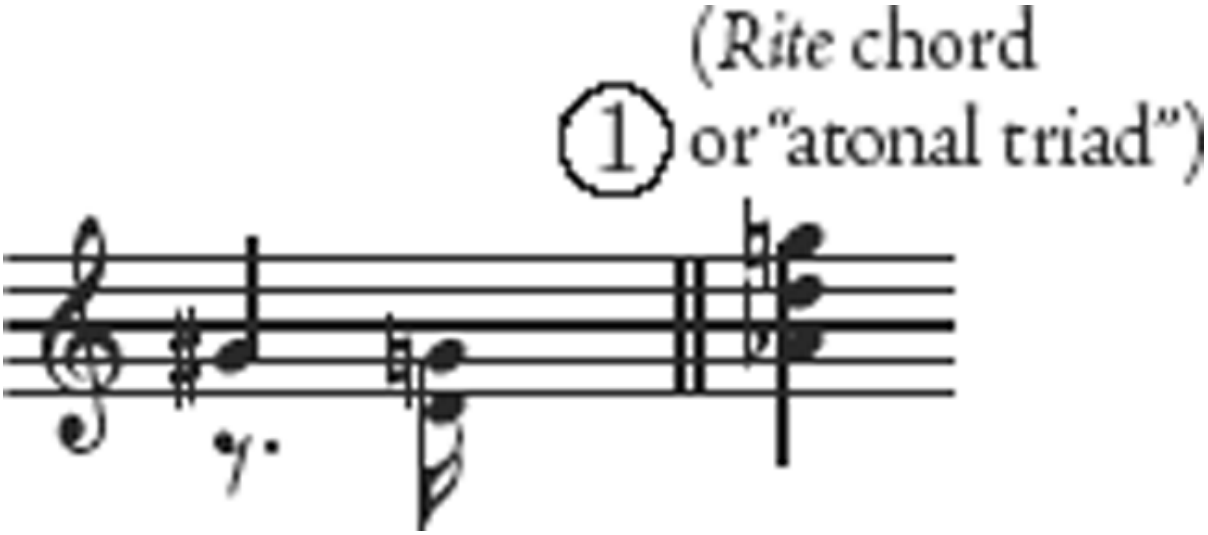


ex. 6-17 Arnold Schoenberg, *Erwartung*, Op. 17, mm. 1–7

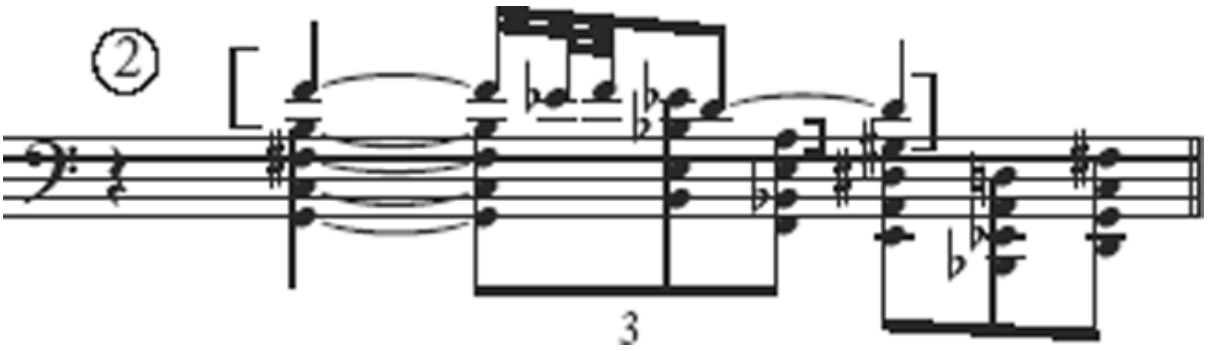
All of these potential features (many of which Schoenberg later codified in his *Harmonielehre*) are immediately actualized in *Erwartung*. The left-hand component of the downbeat chord that immediately follows the initial harmony is an atonal triad with the augmented fourth on the bottom—a "major" atonal triad, if you will. But the melodic B that the chord accompanies can be construed as an extension of the chord according to the principles just described: it stands a tritone above the top note of the atonal triad, producing a four-note harmony that alternates augmented and perfect fourths. And now note that that flute figure that comes in immediately afterward continues the alternation with an E a fourth above the B, and a B♭ a tritone above the E. (The E♭ at the end of the flute figure, preceded by a sort of "leading tone," could be added to the configuration if desired. And the choice of A for the bass of the next chord can now be rationalized as well: it too is an extension of the same series of fourths and tritones.) Thus we are observing the interpenetration of the horizontal and vertical dimensions that the "emancipation of dissonance" made possible; but we are also observing the extreme normative limitation that Schoenberg is voluntarily placing on his "emancipated" harmonic and melodic materials. The harmony of *Erwartung*, to a remarkable degree, consists of chords

alternating fourths and tritones, ranging all the way from the basic three-note unit we are now calling the "atonal triad" to extensions of six notes or more. The series of chords in the second measure offers immediate confirmation of this generalization. In transcribing them for piano, Schoenberg had to prune them radically; they are spelled out in full in Ex. 6-18b. Particularly telling is the way the melodic D is suspended over a harmonic shift that embeds it in two successive extended atonal triads. Atop the first it stands at the distance of a perfect fourth, and above the second the distance expands to a tritone; in context, the effect is analogous to that of a modal mixture.

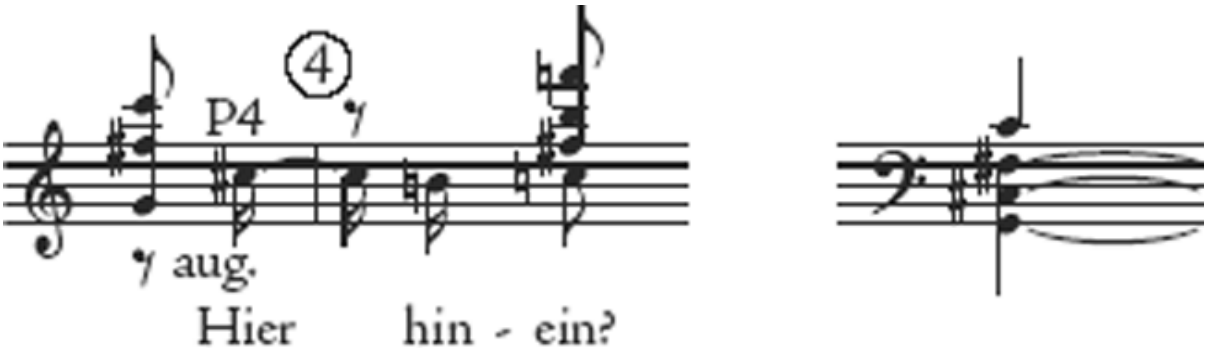
The pervasiveness of the atonal triad and its extensions can be corroborated in almost any bar of *Erwartung*. It supports many if not most of the important vocal entrances, starting with the first: the harmony at the first sung note is an inversion similar to the one noted at the very beginning. It is sorted out in Ex. 6-18c, where the voice's C♯ appears as the "tenor." The relationship is confirmed and clarified at the next harmony, where the voice straightforwardly plays bass extension to an atonal triad represented in the piano's right-hand part. By contrast (or complement), at the next important voice entrance (m. 7) it plays "soprano extension" to an atonal triad represented in the left-hand part.



ex. 6-18a Atonal triads and extensions in Arnold Schoenberg, *Erwartung*



ex. 6-18b Atonal triads and extensions in Arnold Schoenberg, *Erwartung*



ex. 6-18c Atonal triads and extensions in Arnold Schoenberg, *Erwartung*

The ultimate extension of the atonal triad, as we have already learned from Ives, is the aggregate harmony, the full chromatic gamut sounded as a chord. This famously happens at the pianissimo ending of *Erwartung*, where a series of chromatically ascending six-note extensions is met by a chromatically descending series. The two lines become a fuzzy stretto, with different groups of instruments moving at different rates of speed, so that ultimately a sonically saturating glissando effect is achieved, only to be suddenly cut off, sans ritardando and sans crescendo, at curtain's fall.

This striking effect has supported many interpretations. The most obvious one is dramatic, or rather representational: a musical rendering of being emotionally engulfed, or even, perhaps, of fainting dead away. Another, equally convincing, interpretation (which in no way contradicts the first) is technical. It was memorably described by the pianist and critic Charles Rosen in a short handbook on Schoenberg. "The saturation of musical space," Rosen suggested, "is Schoenberg's substitute for the tonic chord of the traditional musical language."[20] By characterizing "the saturation of chromatic space" as "a fixed point toward which the music moves, as a point of rest and resolution," Rosen ascribed to it a "closure" function (which, of course, is what he meant by calling it a substitute tonic in the first place). The idea had profound implications for Schoenberg and his notion of "pantonality," and we will come back to it.

Notes:

(20) Charles Rosen, *Arnold Schoenberg* (New York: Viking Press, 1975), pp. 57–58.

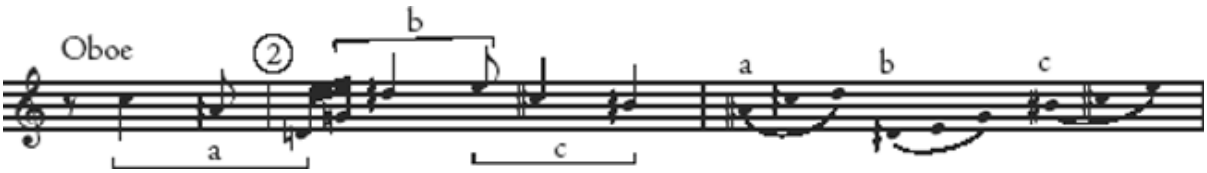
Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Erwartung

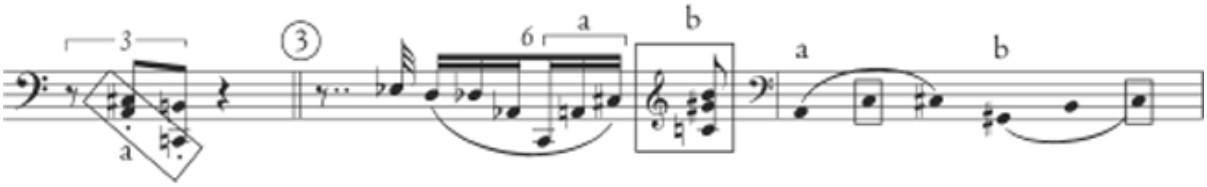
CROSSING THE CUSP

Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

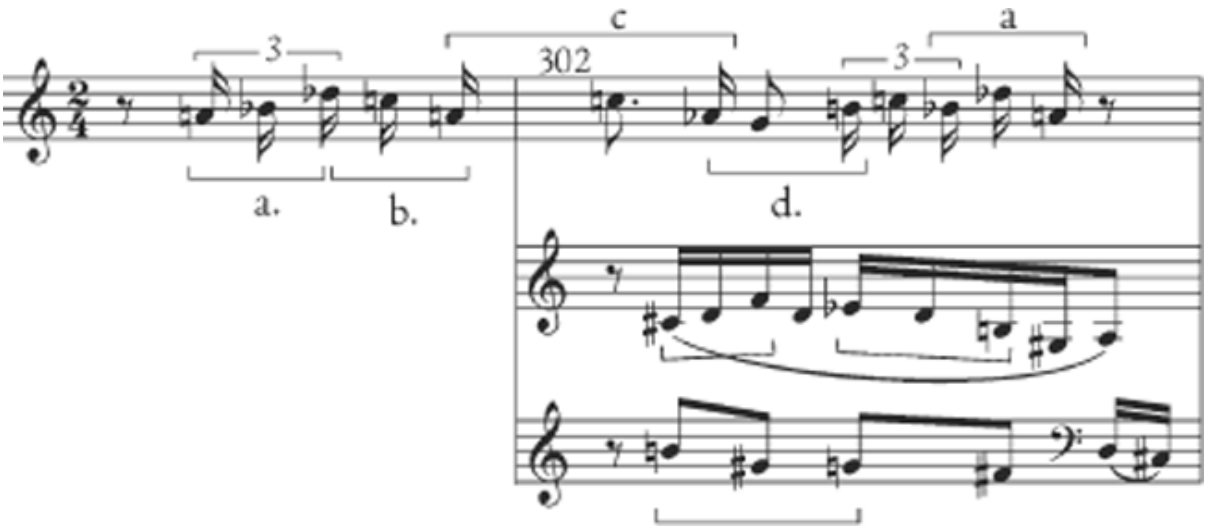
But first we need to investigate the other pervasive motif in *Erwartung*, which first appears as the three notes (C♯–A♯–D) that initiate the lyrical oboe line in mm. 1–2, and reappears in transposition as the last three notes of the same phrase (E–C♯–B♯). The two notes that come in between, G and D♯, replicate the same motif when combined with the E that follows them, thus producing a pair of overlapping (or "imbricated") statements (Ex. 6-19a). This motif consists of a semitone and a minor third enclosed within a major third. Its "best normal order" is /0 1 4/, with the semitone beneath the minor third. But like the atonal triad, it can appear in the score with either interval on top (or to put it more formally, it has an inversional equivalent). And it can be varied (or distorted) in other ways as well.



ex. 6-19a Melodic motif in Arnold Schoenberg, *Erwartung*



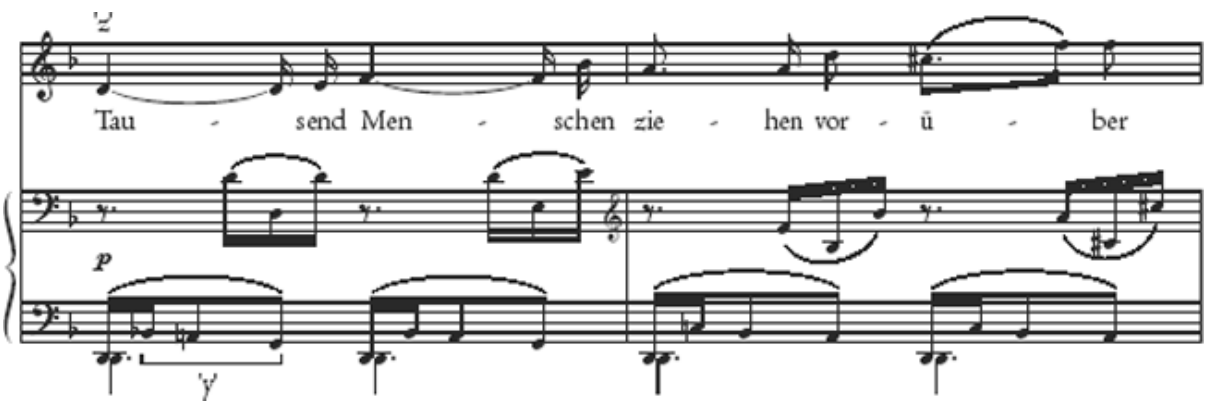
ex. 6-19b Melodic motif in Arnold Schoenberg, *Erwartung*



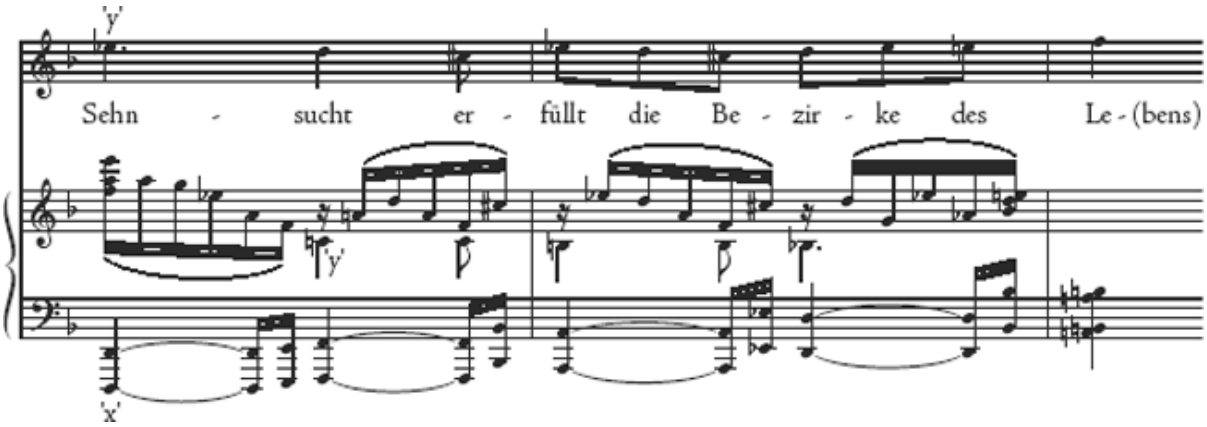
ex. 6-19c Melodic motif in Arnold Schoenberg, *Erwartung*

In one guise or another, then, this motif inhabits virtually every measure of the score. At the end of m. 4, for example, it is found both at the end of the voice part and also as the nervous staccato ostinato running beneath. Stretched out as if on a rack, its intervals expanded to sevenths and tenths, it comes at the end of m. 6 (F–D–C♯). A comparison of the staccato bass chords in m. 1 and the bass arpeggio in m. 3 will show a version of it (A–C–C♯) crossing the cusp between harmony and melody, and it is followed in m. 3 by a transposition (G♯–B–C) that maintains a common tone (Ex. 6-19b). All of these procedures become standard means of composerly navigation as the music unfolds. Particularly telling are the settings, like the one at mm. 301–302 (Ex. 6-19c), where the motif and its inversion are both multiply embedded in a single melodic line (sometimes even further reinforced by the accompaniment).

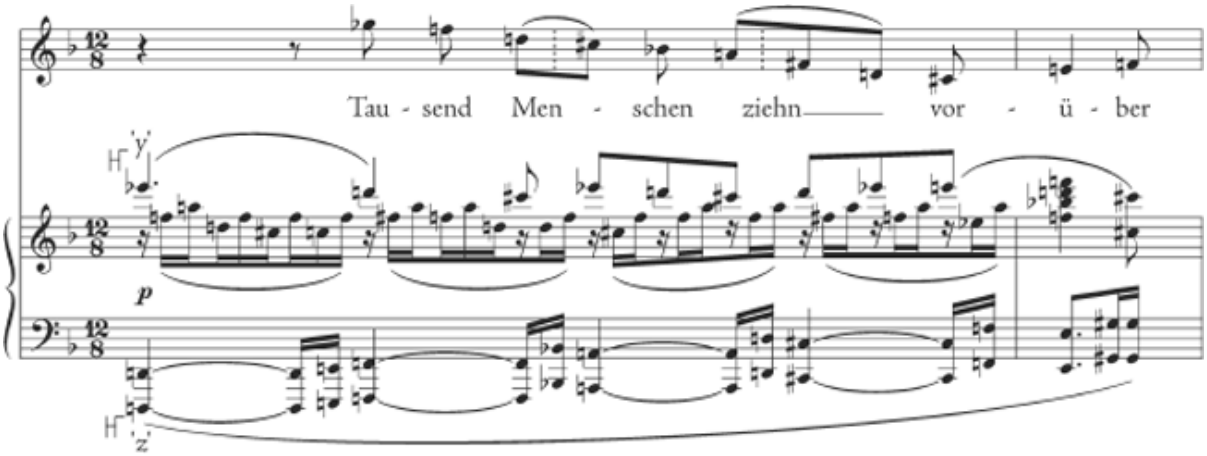
In 1967 Herbert Buchanan, a doctoral candidate in musicology at Rutgers University, published a short article, "A Key to Schoenberg's *Erwartung* (Op. 17)," that took nearly everyone by surprise.[21] He had discovered that the closing measures of the opera contained a quotation, encompassing both text and music, lengthy and literal enough to be obvious to anyone alerted to its presence (and in fact almost immediately repeated), from an early song of Schoenberg's: *Am Wegrand* ("By the roadside"), op. 6, no. 6 (1905). (The relationship had previously been noted in a footnote to Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno's book *Philosophy of New Music* (*Philosophie der neuen Musik*, 1949), but as Adorno's work was as yet untranslated and little known in the American academy, Buchanan may well have found it independently.) What was surprising about the discovery was not only the fact that it seemed to contradict the opera's reputation for "athematicism," but also the fact that the song in question, although it was composed only four years earlier than the opera, was quite conventional (or "tonal") in harmonic design. Even in its operatic recycling, the passage in question can be analyzed perfectly straightforwardly in D minor (Ex. 6-20).



ex. 6-20a Arnold Schoenberg, *Am Wegrand*, mm. 3–4



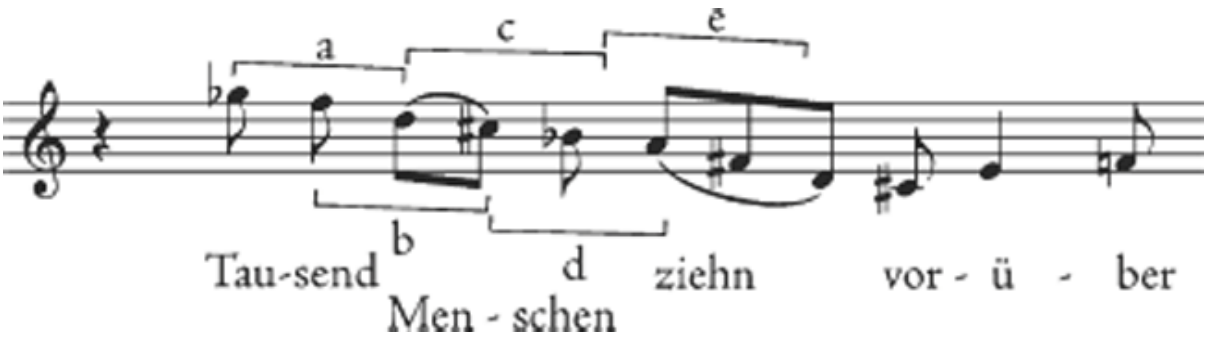
ex. 6-20b Arnold Schoenberg, *Am Wegrand*, mm. 22–24



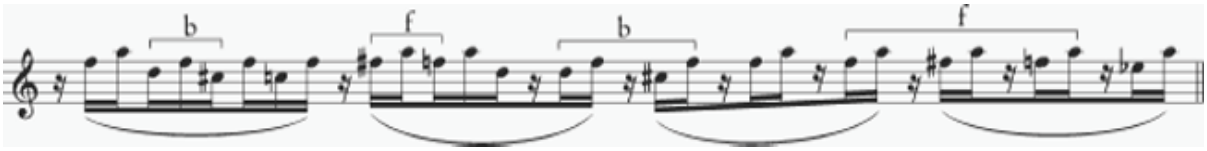
ex. 6-20c Arnold Schoenberg, *Erwartung*, mm. 411–412

As the example shows, the quotation from the song in the opera is not exact. Rather it is a conflation of two spots. The opening voice melody in Ex. 6-20a is transferred to the orchestral bass in Ex. 6-20c, and the voice countermelody in Ex. 6-20b is transferred to the orchestra in Ex. 6-20c and accompanied in the operatic voice part by a modified transposition of itself that descends in alternating semitones and minor thirds, so that it consists almost entirely of imbricated /0 1 4/ motifs or inversions thereof (Ex. 6-21a).

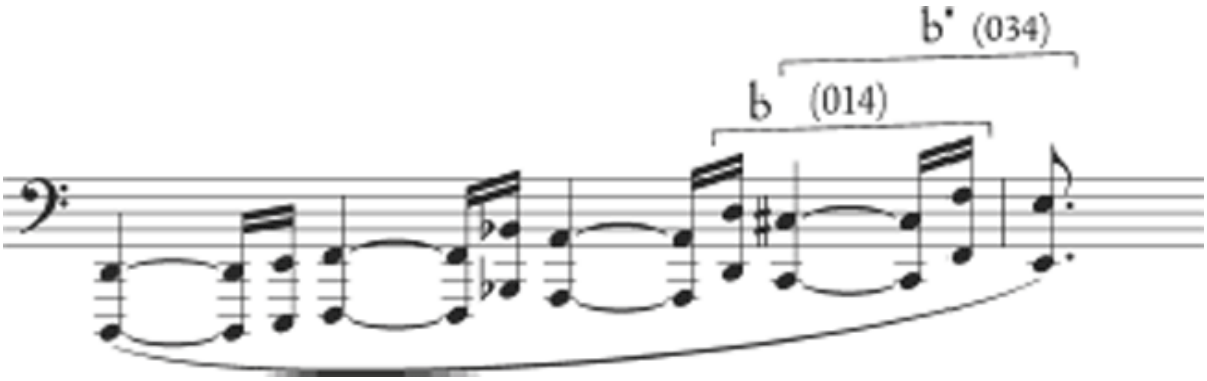
Meanwhile, the middle voice or harmonic filler in the orchestra part is also saturated with /0 1 4/ motifs. The first beat contains the motif labeled “b” in Ex. 6-21a (D–F–C♯); the second contains a new motif “f” (F–F♯–A), a transposed permutation of “b”; between the second and third beats motif “b” reappears, as does motif “f” in the fourth beat (Ex. 6-21b). And finally, the orchestral bass, which as we know is a direct quotation from *Am Wegrand*, a song in D minor, contains a four-note group in which the /0 1 4/ motif and its inversion are imbricated (Ex. 6-21c).



ex. 6-21a /0 1 4/ motif in Arnold Schoenberg, *Erwartung*, m. 411, voice part



ex. 6-21b /0 1 4/ motif in Arnold Schoenberg, *Erwartung*, m. 411, figuration



ex. 6-21c /0 1 4/ motif in Arnold Schoenberg, *Erwartung*, m. 411, bass

Thus motif b/b′ in Ex. 6-21c, which on its original occurrence in *Am Wegrand* had been invested with tonal functions (another way of saying that its constituent pitches were identifiable as degrees 7♯–1–2–3 in D minor) has been abstracted to serve, throughout *Erwartung*, as a basic melodic shape or *Grundgestalt* with only contextual harmonic significance. Its progress from the one (functional or "tonal") status to the other (contextual or "atonal") one might seem to symbolize Schoenberg's progress, as he then conceived it (or at least as he later described it), over the hump from his "tonal" to his "pantonal" period. That could well have been his reason for interpolating the quotation from the older song. The unanswerable question, already broached, is whether he consciously mined a tonal piece for a motif to abstract and as it were "denature," or whether memories of *Am Wegrand* were stirred when Schoenberg found himself playing so extensively with the tones (or, more precisely, with the intervallic relationships) of one of its characteristic motifs.

Notes:

(21) Herbert Buchanan, "A Key to Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, op. 17," *JAMS* XX (1967): 434–49.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Expressionism

Atonality

MUSICAL SPACE

Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

But now the repressed questions must be faced. Why was it desirable to denature tonality? Why was emancipation of the dissonance a necessary step? Unrelieved dissonance suited certain dreadful or turbulent moods, all right, of a kind then favored by many artists, especially German ones. But other moods—joy, serenity, contentment, anything "positive"—were seemingly put off limits. Were they no longer suitable for artistic representation? Did they merely reflect a "false consciousness" that it was the duty of true artists ("who do not turn their eyes away," in the words of our epigraph) to unmask? And why was motivic saturation so desirable, especially when (as we have seen) its exacting compositional requirements could seem to contradict the "instinctive" creative freedom Schoenberg proclaimed?

As long as we view Schoenberg solely as an "expressionist," a dealer in emotions, these questions will continue to disturb us. But there was another, equally potent and equally distinguished component in Schoenberg's Romantic legacy that he consciously sought to maximalize: the legacy of the Sublime. Alongside his fascination with "inner [that is, psychic] occurrences" was an equally strong interest in spiritual transcendence and the possibilities of representing it in art. From a rationalist perspective the two impulses—psychological realism vs. occult revelation—can seem to be in contradiction. From a more accommodating perspective that regards psychic phenomena as emanations from a spiritual source (or as "micro-cosmic" reflections of the "macrocosm"), they can be viewed as complementary. It is when we adopt this complementary perspective that Schoenberg's musical innovations (or rather, his motivations toward them) become coherent.

fig. 6-3 Wassily Kandinsky and Schoenberg with their wives, Nina and Gertrud, at Pörtshach on the Wörthersee, 1927.

Significantly, the most unambiguous expressions of Schoenberg's interest in the occult are found in his correspondence with Kandinsky, the early abstract painter, who justified his own artistic radicalism in terms of his religious strivings, and who summarized his theories in a book entitled *Über das Geistige in der Kunst (On the Spiritual in Art)*, published in 1912. In a letter to Kandinsky dating from the same year, Schoenberg proclaimed "a *unity of musical space demanding an absolute and unitary perception*"[22] (his italics) to be his creative ideal. And he associated this aim with a book that both he and Kandinsky worshipped at the time, Honoré de Balzac's philosophical novel *Séraphîta* (1835), "perhaps the most glorious work in existence," as the musician gushed to the artist.

fig. 6-4 Emanuel Swedenborg.

The long central chapter in *Séraphîta* is an imaginary (and fanciful rather than historically accurate) exposition of the teachings of the occult philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), as related to Wilfrid, a man of thirty, and Minna, a girl of seventeen, by an androgynous ethereal being with whom both are in love and who in the last chapter ascends to an angelic state. The two lovers, who are left to share the love they bore for the angel, are privileged to witness the assumption and are vouchsafed a vision of heaven:

> Wilfrid and Minna now understood some of the mysterious words of the being who on earth had appeared to them under the form which was intelligible to each—Séraphîtus to one, Séraphîta to the other—seeing that here all was homogeneous. Light gave birth to melody, and melody to light; colors were both light and melody; motion was number endowed by the Word; in short, everything was at once sonorous, diaphanous, and mobile; so that, everything existing in everything else, extension knew no limits, and the angels could traverse it everywhere to the utmost depths of the infinite.[23]

This vision is what inspired Schoenberg toward his integrated musical space. Many details in Balzac's heavenly depiction found echo in Schoenberg's musical theorizing. Where in Balzac's heaven "colors were both light and melody," Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre* contained a famous speculation on the possibility of composing "tone-color melodies" (*Klangfarbenmelodien*) that would add another dimension of integration to his utopian musical universe, with timbre playing a role normally assigned to pitch.[24] The closest he came to realizing it was in the third of the *Five Orchestral Pieces*, called "Farben" (colors), where very slowly changing harmonies shimmer with dovetailed instrumental voicings that cause the timbres of sustained tones to shift subtly before one's ears. (In private, Schoenberg habitually referred to his famous color-piece as "Morning by a Lake"; in 1949, he finally added the title to the score.) But it was not just a vision that Schoenberg wanted to transmit. He also wanted to convey an experience—Wilfrid and Minna's experience in ascending to Séraphîta's abode, where "everything existed in everything else." As we already know from his quartet setting of Stefan George's *Entrückung*, Schoenberg regarded his musical breakthroughs in spiritual terms—very much as an "ascent to a higher and better order,"[25] as he put it in a letter to Nicolas Slonimsky, another Russian correspondent. He viewed "pantonality" very much as Balzac presented Séraphîtus/Séraphîta. Surmounting the major/minor dichotomy, voiding all distinctions between particular keys, was for him an achievement comparable to embodying androgyny or double gender. Pantonal music, like Balzac's angel, was a perfected being. To Webern he confided that pantonality, like androgyny, "has given rise to a higher race!"[26]

Like Scriabin's, then, and like Mahler's and Ives's, Schoenberg's was a *Weltanschauungsmusik*, a music that embodied a spiritual "worldview" or universal existential revelation. And it was this in addition to being a music of primal unconscious emotional expression and a music of unprecedented motivic integration. Indeed, as we are about to see, it was the spiritual Weltanschauung that provided the conceptual link between the emotional expression, which depended on the emancipation of dissonance, and the motivic integration, which the same emancipation made possible. One of the most overdetermined musical visions at a time of many visionary extremes, Schoenberg's was the most complex and far-reaching maximalism of them all, and by far the most lastingly influential.

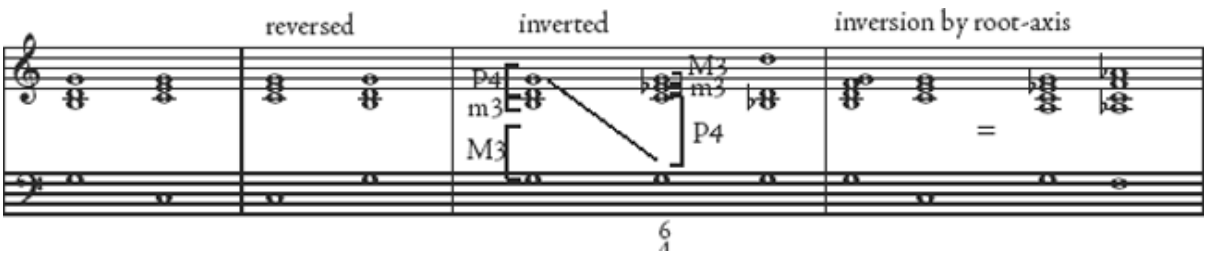
Thus the most important (or at least the most fundamental) thing that the emancipation of dissonance vouchsafed was not the expression of catastrophic emotions, though that was a spectacular by-product, but the achievement of a fully integrated musical space, in which the "horizontal" and "vertical" dimensions were at last made equivalent, and (to recall Balzac), everything musical could exist in everything else. Only by emancipating the dissonance, Schoenberg argued, could musical practice become fully adequate to the musical imagination. "Every musical configuration," he wrote,

> every movement of tones has to be comprehended primarily as a mutual relation of sounds, of oscillatory vibrations, appearing at different places and times. To the imaginative and creative faculty, relations in the material sphere are as independent from directions or planes as material objects are, in their sphere, to our perceptive faculties. Just as our mind always recognizes, for instance, a knife, a bottle, or a watch, regardless of its position, and can reproduce it in the imagination in every possible position, even so a musical creator's mind can operate subconsciously with a row of tones, regardless of their direction, regardless of the way in which a mirror might show the mutual relations, which remain a given quality.[27]

In other words, as long as composition was constrained by rules of consonance and dissonance, or by harmonic functions, "horizontal" ideas like melodies could not always be "vertically" represented, as chords. And a harmonic progression would no longer mean the same thing (whether "syntactically" or "semantically") if it were played in reverse, or if all or some of its intervals were inverted. Imagine a G-major triad followed by a C-major triad. In the context of the key of C major this can mean "the end." But if reversed it can mean anything but that. And if inverted, so that the G-major triad were a C-minor triad, and the C-major triad an F-minor triad, it would all of a sudden (in the same tonal context) lose its syntactical significance altogether and pick up instead a terrific freight of emotion.

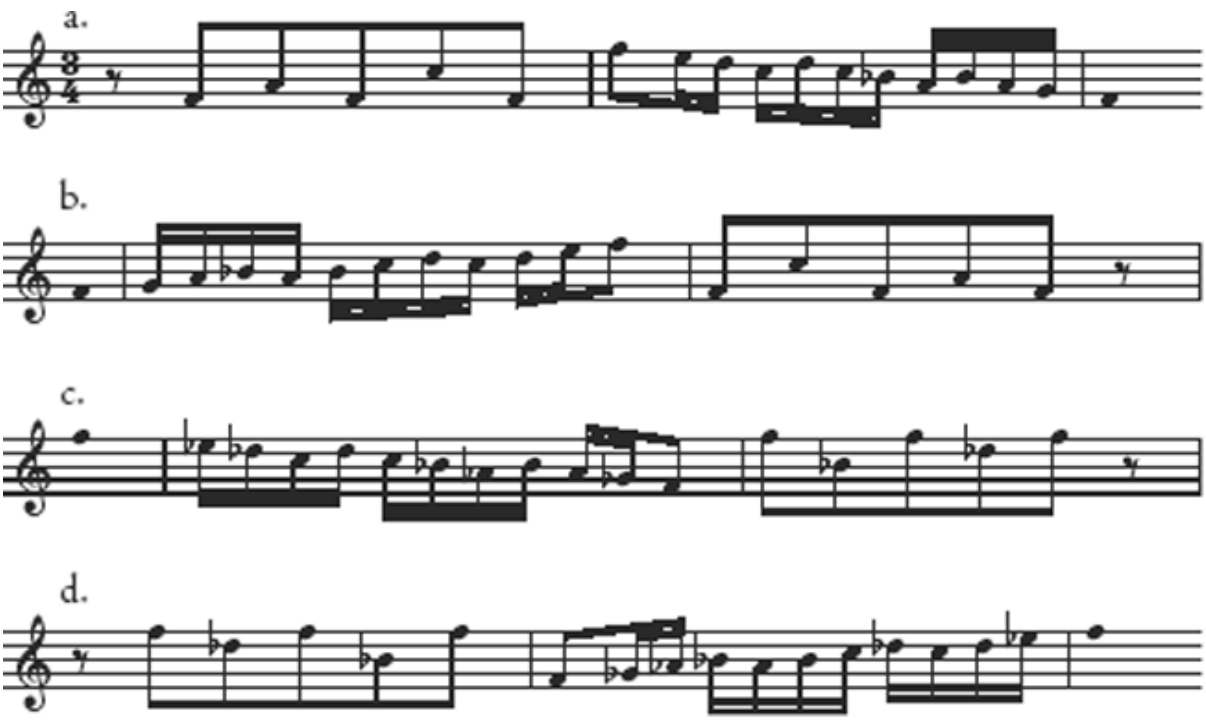
If the voice leading were strictly reproduced, moreover, the inversion would be a syntactic anomaly. And if,

perchance the G-major chord were a dominant seventh, and the inversions (instead of reproducing the original voice leading) took the respective chord roots as their axis, the result would be a syntactic absurdity (Ex. 6-22).



ex. 6-22 A "tonal" cadence inverted

These trivial examples, or a slightly less trivial one once published by the music theorist Joseph Schillinger, who both reversed and inverted the opening phrase of Bach's F-major keyboard invention (Ex. 6-23) will suffice to establish that in "tonal" music, musical space is neither reversible nor invertible without distortion or loss of meaning. But as our analyses both of *Erwartung* and of op. 19, no. 1 have already demonstrated, thanks to the emancipation of dissonance in Schoenberg's expressionist music the horizontal and the vertical are indeed interchangeable and inversions are functionally equivalent. Musical space has been unified, or equalized in every dimension, so that musical objects and ideas (i.e., motifs and their derivatives) can now be "reproduced," just as the mind can imagine them, "in every possible position, ... regardless of their direction."



ex. 6-23 Joseph Schillinger's inversion of the subject of Bach's F-major Invention

Notes:

(22) Schoenberg to Kandinsky, 19 August 1912; *Letters*, p. 54.

(23) Honoré de Balzac, *Séraphîta* (Blauvelt, N.Y.: Freedeeds Library, 1986), p. 173.

(24) Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, pp. 421–22.

(25) Schoenberg to Nicolas Slonimsky, 3 June 1937; *Music since 1900*, p. 1316.

(26) Webern, *The Path to the New Music*, trans. Leo Black (Bryn Mawr, Pa.: Theodore Presser Co., 1963), p. 37.

(27) Schoenberg, "Composition with Twelve Tones (I)" (1941); *Style and Idea*, p. 223.

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Alban Berg

Arnold Schoenberg

“BRAHMINISM” REVISITED

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fig. 6-5 Alban Berg and Anton Webern, spring 1912.

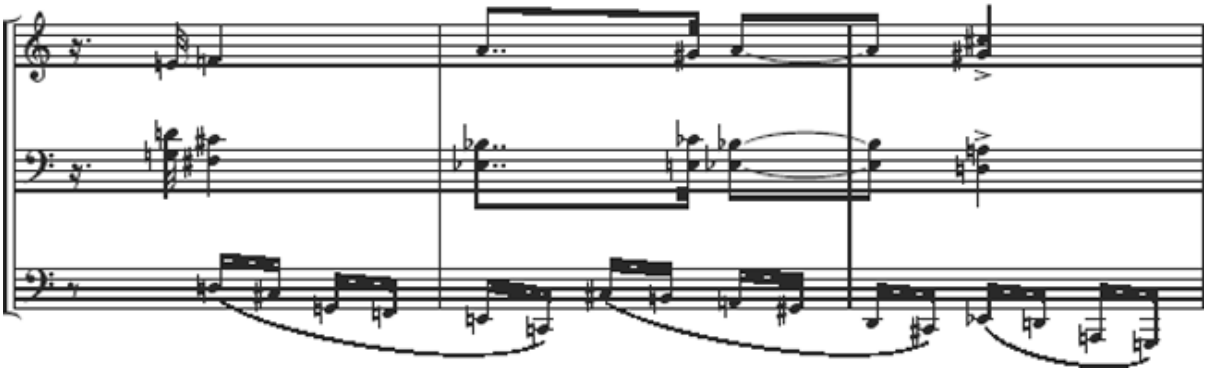
It is certainly possible to view this as a "purely" musical advance, without justification on expressionist or spiritual grounds. In that case it would be a maximalization of the sort of contrapuntally saturated textures we have found in Brahms (particularly in his chamber music), textures that had already become an object of virtual fetish worship on the part of "Brahmin" critics and music lovers. Motivic saturation could also be seen as a historical advance from the point of view of the New German School, recalling their insistence that the general tendency in music history was toward the integration of form and content, with Wagner's "endless melody," a musical texture in which everything was "thematic" (that is, based on meaning-bearing leitmotifs) setting the standard. Once again Schoenberg could be seen as the synthesizer of the Brahms-Wagner antithesis, which gave him a special importance within a historical narrative based on "dialectics." (But see the epilogue to this chapter for a critique of this historical claim.)

One of the first to argue in this way on Schoenberg's behalf was his pupil Alban Berg, in an article called "Why Is Schoenberg's Music So Difficult to Understand?" Like the Chamber Concerto it was a fiftieth-birthday offering to his teacher, first published in a "Festschrift" or celebratory volume devoted to Schoenberg in 1924. The article consists mainly of an analysis of Schoenberg's "official" First Quartet (op. 7), not the one performed under Zemlinsky's auspices in 1897, but one composed in 1905, in which Schoenberg asserted that he had achieved "a direction much more my own."[28]

Berg, undoubtedly on Schoenberg's authority, associated this new direction with the quartet's unprecedented level of motivic saturation. There was "hardly any" material in the quartet, he claimed, even in its accompanimental figuration, its ornamental details and textural "fillers," that cannot be traced to its germinating motifs. Having quoted the first ten measures of the quartet, Berg noted that he had in fact supplied the reader with the whole hour-long quartet *in nuce* (in a nutshell). That made the music more difficult to understand than any other contemporary music because comprehending its luxuriance required more cognitive work from the listener. And, Berg provocatively averred, it also made the music better than any other contemporary music. Such "unheard-of excess" of motivic richness, unifying the music in all its "harmonic, polyphonic and contrapuntal domains," had not previously existed "since Bach."[29] But the claims did not stop there. The emancipation of dissonance, Berg implied, made it possible to eliminate that "hardly any" and produce a music in which literally every note, whether melodic or harmonic, was "thematic." If the manner of the First Quartet was better than what had been before, then the manner of the Second Quartet was better yet, and so on into the music contemporaneous with Berg's essay. The "progress" claim, coupled with the more-than-implied "Brahmin" snobbery of the title, made Berg's essay immediately controversial, and the controversy has not subsided to this day.

The reason controversy has never subsided had to do not only with the brashness of the rhetoric, but also with the sheer impressiveness of the technical achievement, which made Schoenberg's music such an influence on other composers and music theorists even as audiences continued to find it difficult and, in the opinion of many "laymen," unrewarding. It is certainly not the aim of a book like this to resolve controversy, nor is there room for the kind of close analysis it would require of an hour-long composition fully to sustain Berg's thesis. And yet the only evidence given thus far of the remarkable motivic consistency made possible by "emancipating the dissonance" has been a two-page piano piece lasting perhaps a minute, and a very general description of an opera that, like any opera, can claim coherence on the basis of its plot and text even without considering the music in detail.

As a parenthesis, then, let us replicate Berg's experiment, so to speak, with one of Schoenberg's emblematic expressionist compositions: "Vorgefühle" ("Premonitions"), the first of the *Five Orchestral Pieces*, op. 16, composed with characteristic speed in May 1909, shortly before *Erwartung*. Specifically, let us consider the whole piece in the light of Ex. 6-24, a reduction of its first three measures, which (we may propose) foreshadows the whole piece *in nuce*, as study of the full score will confirm.



ex. 6-24 Reduction of Arnold Schoenberg’s *Vorgefühle*, mm. 1–3

Such a detailed comparison will indeed show that literally every note in the orchestral piece, “in all its harmonic, polyphonic, and contrapuntal domains,” can be referred to Ex. 6-24, which could therefore be asserted as the composition’s *Grundgestalt*. But Ex. 6-24 already betrays numerous motivic interrelationships. The first three sixteenth-notes in the running bass, to begin with, are an arpeggiation of the “atonal triad” at the downbeat of m. 2, which in terms of sounding duration counts as the main harmony in Ex. 6-24. Its “best normal order” is /0 1 6/.

The next three notes in the bass are an arpeggiation of the second chord in m. 1, which is a transposition of the chord that is held by the bassoons, and then the trombones, through the whole second half of the piece. Its constituent intervals could be represented in best normal order as /0 4 5/ (or, transposed up a semitone, as /1 5 6/. And the final chord in Ex. 6-24, the only one that contains four notes, is the sum of the two already tabulated: its constituent intervals could be represented as /0 1 5 6/. Not only that, but it too is explicitly arpeggiated in the running bass (the last two notes in m. 2 and the first two in m. 3).

The remaining two chords (the first in the piece and the one between the two repeated atonal triads in m. 2) are both presented as neighbors to the longer-sustained harmonies, proceeding to them in a way that should by now look habitual with Schoenberg, by semitones in contrary motion. Remarkably enough, these two chords, obviously “ornamental” in duration and function as implied by voice leading, are the only traditionally consonant harmonies in evidence. The one in the middle of m. 2, though wearing an enharmonic disguise, is actually an E-major triad. Thus the structural functions of consonance and dissonance seem to have been effectively (and perhaps parodistically) reversed. The one remaining harmony that will be found to play an important role in the composition, an augmented triad, may be found in the conjectural *Grundgestalt* as given in Ex. 6-24 by connecting (or collecting) the rhythmically prominent notes in the top voice: F, A, C♯. Thus local or contextual pitch “hierarchies” (ad hoc assignments of relative importance) continue to play a role in determining the syntax of the music.

Notes:

(28) Schoenberg, “Analysis of the First Quartet” (1936); Rauchhaupt, *Documentary Study*, p. 36.

(29) Alban Berg, “Why Is Schoenberg’s Music So Difficult to Understand?” (1924); in *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*, eds. Elliott Schwarz and Barney Childs (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), pp. 68–69.

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See also from Grove Music Online
Pantonality

Arnold Schoenberg

MAXING OUT

Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

And yet Berg's article, written long after the fact, was an anachronistic measure of Schoenberg's achievement. By 1924, as we shall see, "purely musical" values were staging a strong comeback; but in the heyday of early twentieth-century maximalism, they could never have sustained the kind of claims Schoenberg himself was making for his "pantonality." The reason why the spiritual or spiritualist element has taken a back seat in discussions of Schoenberg to the seemingly contradictory discourses of "expressionism" and "pure music" (between which it had originally provided the necessary mediating link) has partly to do with changing fashions: occult matters greatly declined, and abstract or "structural" matters greatly surged after World War I as standards for validating or evaluating art. But it also has to do with Schoenberg's notoriously spasmodic artistic production. The masterwork that would have given supreme expression to his spiritual concerns remained unfinished, and is little known.

Late in 1912, Schoenberg was seized with the idea of composing an operatic trilogy on the subject of Balzac's *Séraphîta*, the philosophical novel that so excited his imagination. Again he turned to Marie Pappenheim for the libretto. Alternatively, and concurrently, he planned a vast choral symphony in emulation of Mahler's Eighth (the "Symphony of a Thousand"), which was itself a maximalization of Beethoven's Ninth. The earliest surviving sketch for the symphony, dated 27 December 1912, is a recitative labeled "seraphita." The culminating movement, for which the text was finished in January 1915, would have been a counterpart to the mystical final chapters of Balzac's novel, which contained the vision of heaven.

This text contained several plain or covert paraphrases from Balzac, of which one—the Archangel Gabriel's opening speech, "Whether right, left, forward or backwards, up or down, one has to go on without asking what lies before or behind"—resonates as well with Schoenberg's description to Kandinsky of his "absolute and unitary" musical space, the original stimulus for the emancipation of the dissonance. We know its musical setting not from the symphony finale, which Schoenberg never wrote, but from the sketches of a work that eventually took its place in his creative agenda: *Die Jakobsleiter* ("Jacob's ladder"), another grandiose oratorio that would have been something to set beside *Gurrelieder*, and which he started to compose in 1917.

The music leading up to Gabriel's Balzac-inspired opening line is given in Ex. 6-25a. It begins with an ostinato derived from a six-note "row of tones," as Schoenberg put it, that alternated half steps and whole steps from a starting point on C♯. (This strict alternation of tones and semitones makes Schoenberg's row a segment of what we now call the octatonic scale, of course, but there is no evidence that he conceived it that way.) To achieve the heavenly unity he sought, Schoenberg intended to base all the themes in the oratorio on this "row," which (whether by coincidence or design) begins with the same D-minor scale-segment (C♯–D–E–F) that he had previously mined from *Am Wegrand* for use in *Erwartung*. (It comes back in the second half of *Die Jakobsleiter to* represent the voice of "the liberated soul.")

The maneuver that made the opening of *Die Jakobsleiter* demonstrably a musical representation of Balzac's heaven was the immediate combination of the ostinato drawn from the octatonic segment with the complementary hexachord (F♯, A, B♭, B, C, E♭)—that is, the remaining six tones necessary to complete the

aggregate. Like the octatonic hexachord from which Schoenberg derived the opening ostinato, this hexachord is also invariant when inverted, and can therefore represent or actually display the equivalency of "up and down, right or left, forward or backward."

Schoenberg demonstrated these properties by presenting the second hexachord as a pair of the /0 1 4/ motifs so familiar from *Erwartung*, the one quite conspicuously the inversion of the other (Ex. 6-25b). They are sounded piecemeal but then sustained in the winds while the strings continue to sound the first hexachord as an ostinato running beneath.

As soon as the two wind chords have been completed in the higher register and are being sustained there, the string ostinato running beneath accelerates into a rhythmic diminution, which is then treated as a stretto. That is, different instruments enter in counterpoint with different orderings of the six tones of the hexachord, so calculated that after six such entries all six constituent tones are continuously present in the texture. Chalk up another aggregate simultaneity to go with Scriabin's and Ives's!

Just as in the *Acte préalable* (the ultimate exhibit in Chapter 4) or the *Universe* symphony (the ultimate exhibit in Chapter 5), we now have a completely saturated and completely symmetrical—which is to say a completely unitary, completely invariant, and functionally quiescent—musical space. And like its companions, Schoenberg's construction exists and was motivated not simply as a technical feat but as a metaphor for a spiritual vision, a Weltanschauung. Or rather, to put it at once more boldly and more truly in terms of its conception, like Scriabin and Ives, Schoenberg was using his music here as a medium of occult revelation—a representation or even an enactment of an "ascent to a higher and better order."

When the origin of atonality in a transrational, uncanny discourse is recognized, and its nature as a medium of occult revelation is grasped, both its heritage and its reason for being are clarified. It emerges as the outcome of a hundred years of romantic striving for sublime utterance. *Die Jakobsleiter*, with its religiously symbolic aggregate harmony, stands along with the grandiose torsos of Scriabin and Ives at the end of the line that began with Haydn's "Chaos" and Beethoven's Ninth. *Erwartung*, with its culminating aggregate symbolizing emotional overload, had already pressed to a seemingly unsurpassable limit the capacity of music to underscore and intensify dramatic catharsis—the purging power of terror. No wonder Schoenberg had to give up his attempt to surpass the unsurpassable. His failure to complete *Die Jakobsleiter*, like Scriabin's to complete the *Mysterium* or Ives the *Universe*, was emblematic of a predicament in European culture. Maximalism had maxed out.

Unless, that is, it went in the other direction.

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See also from Grove Music Online
Anton Webern

AT THE OPPOSITE EXTREME

Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
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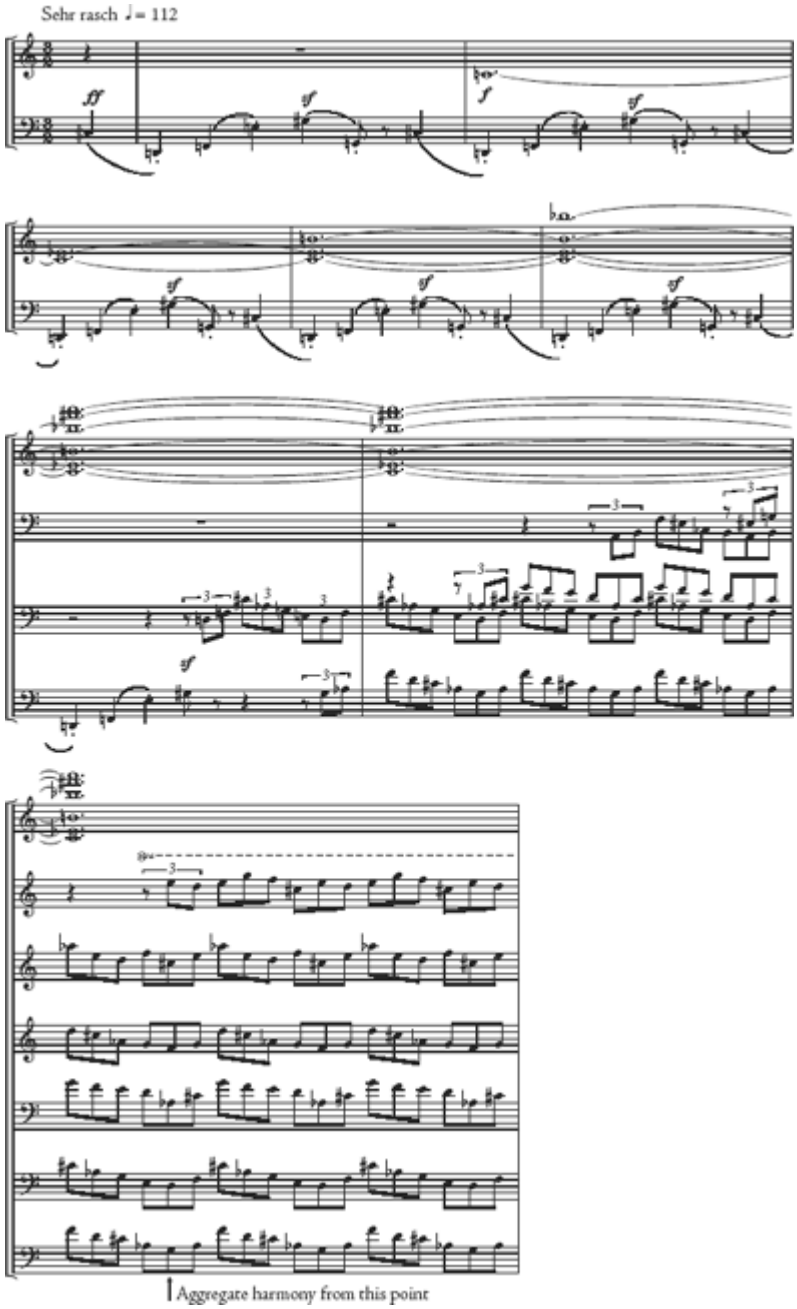
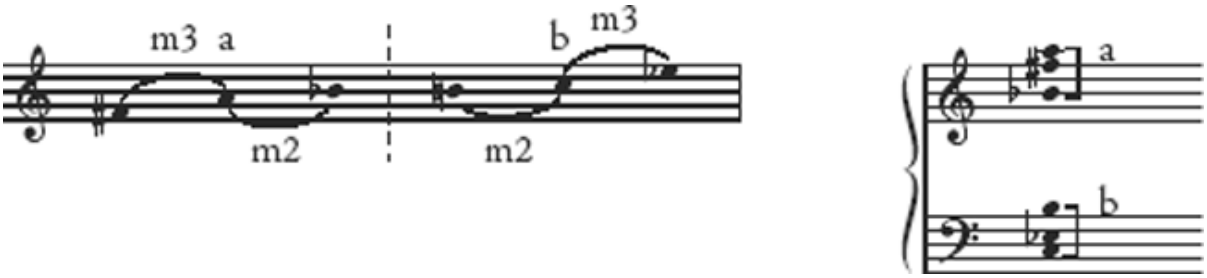


ex. 6-25a Arnold Schoenberg, *Die Jakobsleiter*, mm. 1–8



ex. 6-25b Complementary hexachord and derivative harmonies

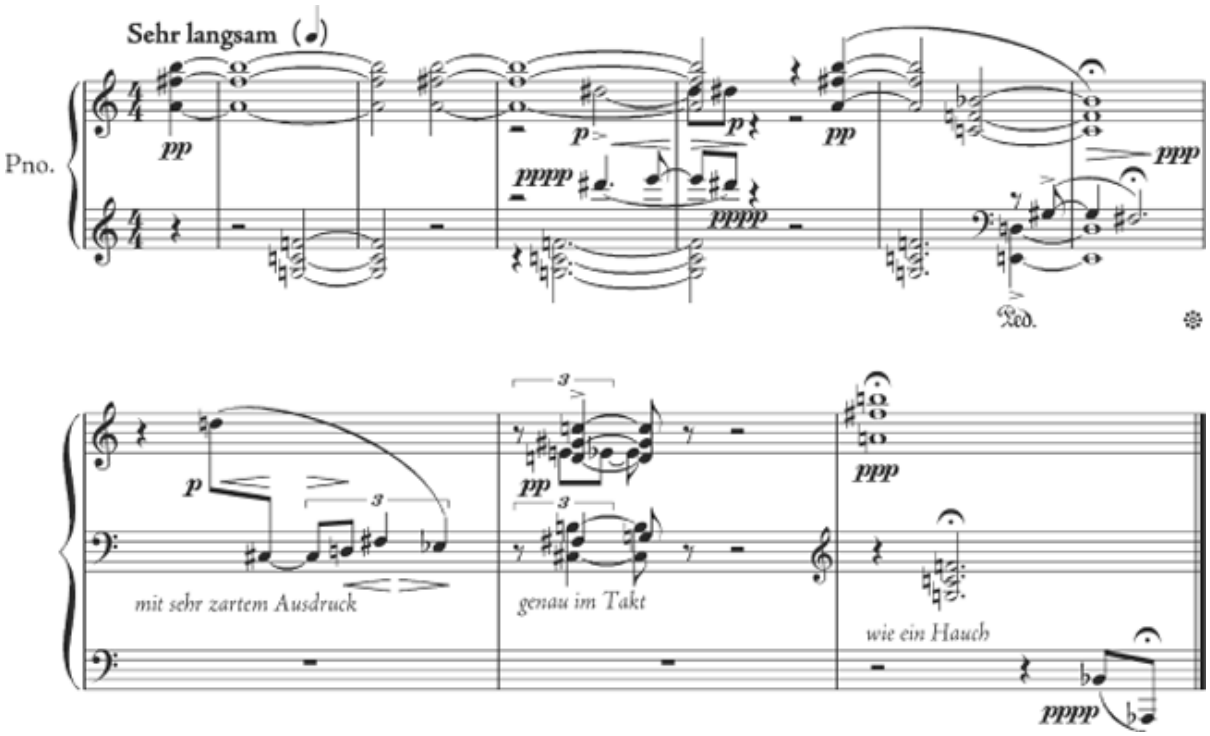
The idea of the "aggregate" or full chromatic gamut as symbolizing closure, or (more practically) as providing the opportunity for it, is curiously corroborated at the opposite end of the temporal and expressive scale by a number of pieces of extraordinary—indeed unprecedented—brevity. Among the most curious yet (backhandedly) characteristic products of the maximalist impulse, they bore a relationship to Beethoven's Bagatelles (or Schubert's *Moments musicaux*) comparable to the relationship that *Gurrelieder* or *Die Jakobsleiter* bore to the Ninth Symphony. They provided an arena in which Schoenberg, and even more enthusiastically and committedly his pupil Webern, could strive for the maximum in compression—"every glance a poem, every sigh a novel," as Schoenberg put it in a preface he contributed to the first edition of Webern's *Bagatelles* for string quartet, composed in 1911–1913 but only published in 1924. Even at the tiny end, determined extremism of this kind is a mark of the maximalist impulse.

Ex. 6-26 contains three such pieces, composed for increasingly elaborate performing media. The first is the sixth and last of Schoenberg's *Kleine Klavierstücke*, op. 19, composed in June 1911, and conveying (as the composer remarked one day) the emotion he felt at Mahler's funeral in May. It is nine measures long. Next comes the fifth of Webern's six *Bagatelles*, op. 9, composed a year or two later. It goes on for twelve measures; but as they are half the length of Schoenberg's measures, the piece is actually shorter. Finally comes the fourth of Webern's *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, op. 10, which lasts only six measures at a faster tempo, and is the shortest of all. (Webern exceeded its brevity only once, in a five-measure piece for cello and piano composed in 1914.)

These microscopic pieces all share a principle of structure (if such a word may be used to describe something so short). Webern put it best, or at least most vividly, in a memoir about the writing of the *Bagatelles*:

> I had the feeling here that when all twelve notes had gone by, the piece was over.... In my sketch-book I wrote out the chromatic scale and crossed off individual notes. Why? Because I had convinced myself: this note has been there already. It sounds grotesque, incomprehensible, and it was unbelievably difficult. The inner ear decided quite rightly that the man who wrote out the chromatic scale and crossed off individual notes *was no fool*.[30]

Webern exaggerated slightly. No piece, whether by him or by Schoenberg, was ever over after a single round through the twelve pitch classes. But the three pieces chosen for Ex. 6-26 come close.

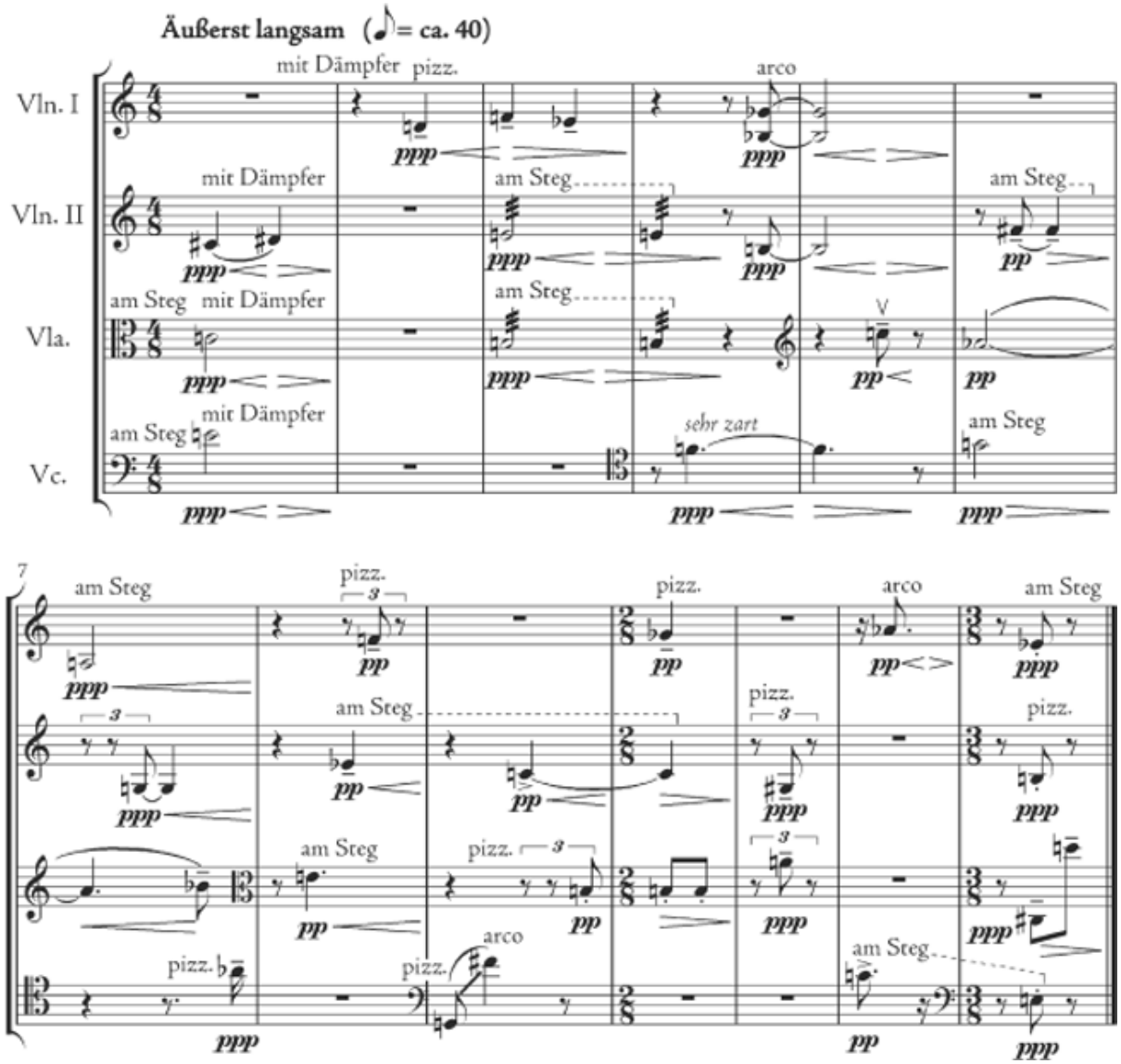


ex. 6-26a Arnold Schoenberg, *Kleine Klavierstücke*, Op. 19, no. 6

If, adopting the method Webern described, one wrote out the notes of the chromatic scale and crossed them off as they occur, one would note the gradual accumulation of the twelve in Schoenberg's piano piece (Ex. 6-26a). The pair of chords that open it, and which together comprise a hexachord (half the chromatic gamut), form a ground that lasts until m. 6, against which the remaining pitches are gradually set off—D♯ and E as an expressive "sigh" figure in m. 3, B♭ as an extension of the fourths in the second "ground chord" in m. 5, immediately followed by D and G♯.

The twelfth and last pitch, C♯, comes in m. 7, after the ground chords have cleared. The single line of which it is a part, marked "with very tender expression," has the character of a recitative, perhaps. In any case it is a transition to the last pair of bars, in which all twelve pitches are quickly "recapitulated," and which ends with a final sounding of the ground chords. They are clearly a coda. So despite its brevity, the piece has a clearly delineated, and by no means untraditional, formal structure; and that structure is articulated by means of the gradual introduction and exhaustion of the chromatic gamut, just as Webern implied.

The profusion of expression marks corroborates the impression of traditional "romantic" expressivity. In Webern's *Bagatelle* (Ex. 6-26b) they are even more profuse. Every note carries detailed performance directions, and an extraordinary range of tone colors (pizzicato, tremolando, *sul ponticello*) is employed, recalling Schoenberg's call for *Klangfarbenmelodien*. Crossing off the pitches, we note the first "exhaustion" with the first violin's A in m. 7. Starting the next count with the next note, G, we note the next closure in the whispered pizzicati in m. 11 (again A, one of the two notes plucked together, can be called the last pitch), followed by a rest. The remainder, again, is coda; and again the pitches are "recapitulated" faster than they had been "exposed."



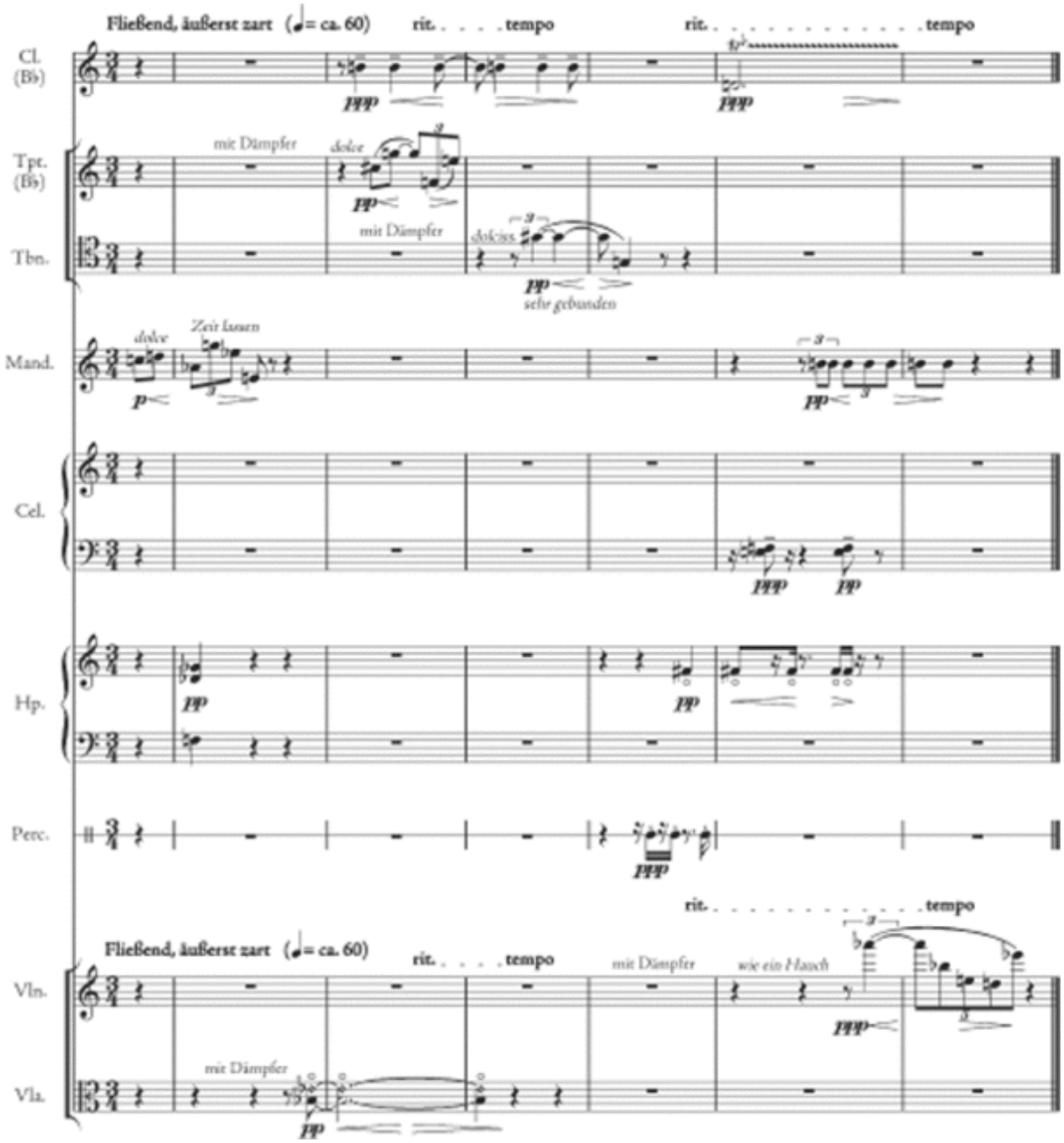
ex. 6-26b Anton Webern, *Sechs Bagatellen* Op. 9, no. 5

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of this miniature is its tonal organization, reminiscent in microcosm of others we have seen. The opening measure fairly proclaims its symmetry. The ascending second in the second violin scrapes the insides of the major third sustained by the viola and cello. To continue the implied contraction would mean a convergence on D, the very note that appears in the first violin in m. 2. Reversing our perspective now, moving out from the axis D to C♯/D♯ and thence to C/E, we have reason to expect B/F to follow—and these are exactly the new pitches introduced by the first violin and viola on the downbeat of m. 3. And our next expectation, for B♭/G♭, is immediately fulfilled by the next pair of new pitches, played as a double stop by the first violin at the end of m. 4 and then sustained.

Only three pitches remain, and they are supplied in mm. 6–7. True, they are not introduced in precisely the order that our outward symmetrical expansion would imply: A♭ comes before, not after A. But we have good corroborating evidence of Webern's symmetrical conceptual layout at the very end, when D, the note identified in the first two bars as the axis pitch, returns to close the piece. It is the "tone center" in the newly literal sense we have already encountered in Strauss and Debussy, and will encounter again, maximalized, in the work of the Hungarian composer Béla Bartók, Webern's contemporary.

Finally, the "orchestral" piece (Ex. 6-26c): as if to compensate for its profusion of colors, it is the most austerely economical with pitches. The reason for putting the word "orchestral" in quotes has to do with

Webern's use of solo strings rather than sections, so that the piece is actually scored like chamber music, for nine instruments "one on a part." Crossing off our pitches as before, we note the first completion in the trumpet's "concert B" (notated as C♯ for a trumpet in B♭) in m. 2. For the first time since we have been counting, by the way, the twelve pitches have been introduced without any repetitions.



ex. 6-26c Anton Webern, *Fünf Stücke* Op. 10, no. 4

The second count begins with the second "concert A" in the clarinet in m. 2 (again notated for an instrument in B♭, thus as B). Again the pitches accumulate without any redundancies (and with the clarinet's trill in m. 5 supplying both the eighth and the ninth pitches). Only the last phrase, in the solo violin (to be played "as if exhaling'), which supplies the twelfth pitch (B♭), indulges in the luxury of a few redundant tones. Its first note, A♭, had already been played (as G♯) by the trombone; its last three pitches, more poetically, could be understood as starting another go-round that trails off into silence.

Given such extreme parsimony, the three notes contributed by the snare drum are somewhat enigmatic. Since they neither reinforce the beat, like a traditional percussion part, nor coincide with the attacks of any

other part, they have to be understood as another melodic phrase in counterpoint with the rest. An even more vivid instance of *Klangfarbenmelodie* takes place in the second piece from the set, in which a tiny triangle tremolo takes over directly from a phrase played by the solo first violin in artificial harmonics, *tremolando*. One clearly has the sense that a single melodic line, in a single approximate "color," has passed from the range of definite pitch into that of indefinite.

It often happens that hostile reviewers seem to sense the implications of radical novelties better than those who affect a more tolerant, less committed stance. Lawrence Gilman, whose important review of Ives's *Concord* Sonata helped make the history of that piece, performed a similar service in the case of Webern's *Five Pieces for Orchestra*. Reviewing the New York premiere in 1926 and perhaps thinking to make fun, he nevertheless captured its claustrophobic expressive intensity better than any contemporaneous writer. Unlike most of his fellow reviewers, Gilman knew romanticism when he heard it, however attenuated. "Men of our generation," he began,

> aim, in such extreme cases as that of Webern, at a pursuit of the infinitesimal, which may strike the unsympathetic as a tonal glorification of the amoeba. There is undeniably a touch of the protozoic: scarcely perceptible tonal wraiths, mere wisps and shreds of sound, fugitive astral vapors, though once or twice there are briefly vehement outbursts, as of a gnat enraged. The Lilliputian Fourth Piece is typical of the set. It opens with an atonal solo for the mandolin; the trumpet speaks as briefly and atonally; the trombone drops a tearful minor ninth. (The amoeba weeps.)[31]

Notes:

(30) Webern, *The Path to the New Music*, p. 51.

(31) Lawrence Gilman, *New York Herald Tribune*, 29 November 1926; quoted in Nicolas Slonimsky, *Lexicon of Musical Invective* (2nd ed., Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), pp. 249–50.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Arnold Schoenberg

Second Viennese School

THE IVORY TOWER

Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

After three quarters of a century one can appreciate the intelligence that informed Gilman's sally. (Most contemporary critics failed to detect any expressivity in atonal music; they heard in it nothing but an outrageous and inexplicable—and therefore insulting—style.) At the time, Schoenberg and his pupils did not recognize good will from any critical corner. Their embattled (or "alienated") posture—another maximalized inheritance from romanticism, though not often recognized as such—was widely imitated by modernists who otherwise had little in common with them. "The customer is always wrong" became an implicit motto.

What made the Viennese version of alienation so influential was Schoenberg's, and his disciples', willingness to act upon it. Immediately upon the end of the First World War, in November 1918, they organized a sort of concert bureau. They called it the *Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen*, or Society for Private Musical Performances. It was subsidized by subscriptions, by the contributions of its members, and by occasional donations from wealthy or aristocratic patrons. Its offerings were not advertised in the papers, and critics were never invited. Indeed, anyone buying tickets was treated with automatic suspicion. One had to promise never to write about the performances for publication. Nor were subscribers informed of the programs in advance (so as to insure "equal attendance at every meeting"). Even applause was forbidden, as if in church.

Not only the public but the performers, too, were watchdogged. The Society's Statement of Aims, written by Berg with Schoenberg's approval, included the proviso that

> performers will be chosen preferably from among the younger and less well known artists, who place themselves at the Society's disposal out of interest in the cause; artists of high-priced reputation will be used only so far as the music demands and permits; and moreover that kind of virtuosity will be shunned which makes of the work to be performed not the end in itself but merely a means to an end which is not the Society's, namely, the display of irrelevant virtuosity and individuality, and the attainment of a purely personal success. Such things will be rendered automatically impossible by the exclusion (already mentioned) of all demonstrations of applause, disapproval, and thanks. The only success that an artist can have here is that (which should be most important to him) of having made the work, and therewith its composer, intelligible.[32]

Such an idealistic statement does contrast baldly with the commercialism (and "commodification") that had by the early twentieth century become pervasive in the economy of all the arts, and that has only mushroomed since. The benefits of self-subsidy, moreover, were tangible: the performances given by Schoenberg's Society before its tiny coterie audience, thanks to its mandated insistence on adequate rehearsal, were legendary in their accuracy; especially difficult pieces were often repeated within programs, and in successive programs as many as six times.

Such a venture could only be short-lived. The Society's first concert took place in December 1918; by the end of 1921 it had fallen victim to the rampant inflation that plagued the economies of war-torn Europe. Within that short period, though, it managed to present 117 concerts at which 154 contemporary compositions by a

wide variety of composers were given a total of 353 performances. And Schoenberg, though he ran the Society dictatorially and earned for that reason some ill will, seems to have been genuinely altruistic in his motives. He did not allow any performances of his own music until the second season, and devoted so much time to the enterprise that he completed no work of his own during the whole period of the Society's existence.

Still, none of the Society's seemingly revolutionary aspects—the resolute shunning of publicity, the intransigent pecking order that placed the composer at the top of a social hierarchy, the pious atmosphere—were really new. As already noted, they were all implicit in the aesthetics of romanticism, and had been explicit in music criticism ever since Liszt, writing about John Field in the 1850s, saw fit to praise the pianist's "indifference to the public," whom he "enchanted ... without knowing it or wishing it."[33] Field, wrote Liszt, "was his own chief audience." All that Schoenberg's Society for Private Performance did was to institutionalize that circumstance and enforce it with a code of etiquette.

The irony of the situation, of course, was that the idealism expressed by Liszt and maximalized by Schoenberg, as a reaction to the commercialization of art, was the product of that very commercialization. But commercialization has gone much further since Schoenberg's day. (For one thing, Schoenberg knew sound recording, the ultimate musical commodifier, only in its relative infancy, and did not take a stand on its potential for affecting the history of music in the twentieth century for good or ill. Needless to say, it will be a major theme in our own assessment of that history.)

The other major, far-reaching implication of the Society's aims and practices was an outgrowth of the neo-Hegelian esthetics first advanced (also in the 1850s) by the New German School, according to which art was valued not with reference to its consumers but only with reference to its own autonomous history. The public was at best irrelevant to this history, at worst a brake on it. Art needed protection from people. It needed the sanctuary that Schoenberg's Society provided for it. (More recently, that sanctuary has been sought in institutions of higher learning.) This has proven to be Schoenberg's most controversial legacy. Does the public have any legitimate claim on artists? Are artists entitled to social support without any requirement of a reciprocal social responsibility? Has society a right to expect from the artists it supports work of social value? Does protection from the public help or hinder the development of art? Does there come a point when a stocktaking becomes possible—or necessary? And if so, who decides that it is time to perform it, and who then gets to actually do it?

Most disquieting of all for the twentieth century, the great century of democracy and totalitarianism alike, is Schoenberg's most central precept, which he enunciated explicitly in an essay of 1946, composed in America, where for ten years he had been living as a refugee from totalitarian persecution: "If it is art it is not for everybody; if it is for everybody it is not art."[34] Can such a proposition be defended in a democracy? If not, is there something wrong with art? Or with democracy?

Notes:

(32) [Alban Berg], Society for Private Musical Performance in Vienna: Statement of Aims; Slonimsky, *Music since 1900*, pp. 1307–8.

(33) Franz Liszt, "John Field and His Nocturnes"; in P. Weiss and R. Taruskin, *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents* (2nd ed., Belmont, CA: Thomson/Schirmer, 2007), p. 312.

(34) Schoenberg, "New Music, Outmoded Music, Style and Idea" (1946); *Style and Idea*, p. 124.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

EPILOGUE: HOW MYTHS BECOME HISTORY

Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Arnold Schoenberg

Johannes Brahms

SCHOENBERG'S BRAHMS

Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Recall the quotation, toward the end of Schoenberg's "atonal" monodrama *Erwartung*, of the opening phrase from *Am Wegrand*, a song in D minor (Ex. 6-20). Although it had originated in a "tonal" context, the phrase contained a motif (or a pair of inversionally equivalent motifs) that had been serving in the opera as a *Grundgestalt*, a fundamental musical idea or "basic shape" that gave coherence to the harmonically nonfunctional ("atonal") musical texture. There is no reason to suppose that the D-minor melody had been the actual source for the intervallic motif as it appears in the opera. More likely the association occurred to Schoenberg in the course of work, in response to the poetic idea or dramatic situation that the song and the opera had in common: waiting anxiously and fruitlessly for a desired person to appear.

Nevertheless, the notion of a motif crossing over or "progressing" from a tonal to an atonal context attracted Schoenberg, because it represented his stylistic transition to atonality—the "emancipation of dissonance," as he preferred to call it—not as an arbitrary revolution against previous musical norms but as a methodological extension. As such, it could be described as a logical, or in terms of "dialectical" history even an inevitable, outgrowth from "common practice."

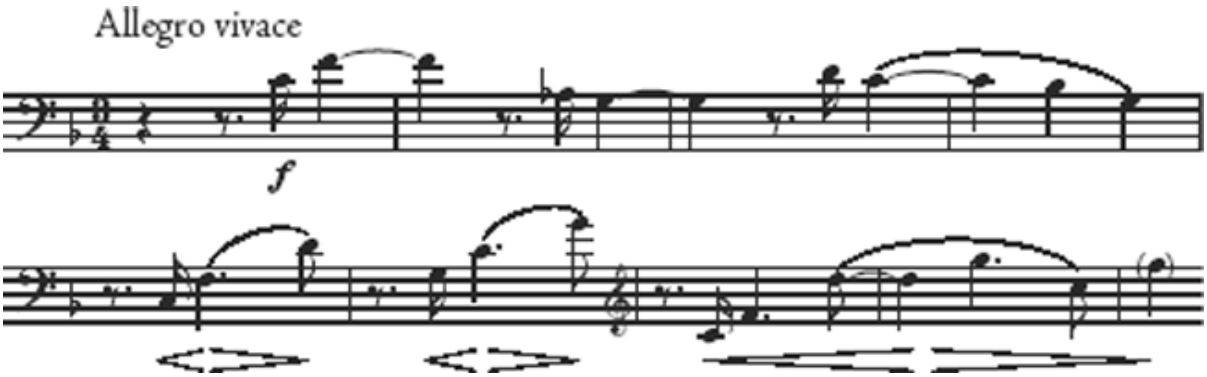
As reflective and self-aware as any modernist, and preoccupied to the point of obsession with his place in history, Schoenberg never resolved his ambivalence on this score. At times, he represented his technical innovations as a virtual starting-over-from-scratch, even a musical bath in Lethe, the mythical river of forgetfulness. His strongest statement of this kind came in a program note he wrote late in 1909 or early in 1910 for the first performance of his *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten* ("Book of the hanging gardens"), op. 15, a song cycle set, like the ending movements of the Second String Quartet, to poems by Stefan George. In these songs, for the first time, Schoenberg unflinchingly maintained his "fluctuating" or "suspended" tonality, and his fully "emancipated" treatment of dissonance, right up to the double bar, withholding all tonal closure. At once aggressive and defensive, the note asserts:

> With the *George-Lieder*, I have succeeded for the first time in approaching an expressive and formal ideal which has haunted me for years. Up until now, I lacked the strength and self-assurance to realize it. But now that I have started definitely upon this road, I am aware that *I have burst the bonds of a bygone aesthetic*; and, although I am striving towards a goal which seems certain to me, I foresee the opposition which I shall have to overcome; I feel the heat of the animosity which even the least temperamental will generate, and I fear that some who have believed in me up till now will not admit the necessity of this evolution.[35]

But even as he proclaimed his radicalism, Schoenberg's ambivalence showed through. He simultaneously characterized his achievement as a break (a "bursting of the bonds") and as an evolution. In later writings, evolution definitely gained the upper hand over break in Schoenberg's self-evaluation, and he emerges ever more consistently in his own telling as a maximalist rather than a revolutionary, even as a sort of conservative, finding precedents for almost all of his stylistic departures in Wagner's "roving harmony" and in what he called Brahms's "developing variation" technique.

Of the two, the Wagner connection was the one more easily perceived and conceded by the composer's contemporaries, especially those who knew the *Gurrelieder*, Schoenberg's epic (that is, "Wagnerian") cantata. Even Schoenberg's expressionist music had an obvious affinity to Wagner's music, consisting as it did of a formally free (or ad hoc) web of motifs. But Wagnerian leitmotifs were heterogeneous and referential, whereas Schoenberg dealt in nonreferential (or rather, self-referential) motifs that were ideally related, in the spirit of romantic "organicism," to a single basic shape (what Emerson called THE ONE). That is why Schoenberg especially prized his descent from Brahms, in whose techniques of *thematische Arbeit* ("working-out of themes") he came to see the source of his own *Grundgestalt* idea.

But of course, or perhaps even needless to say, the Brahms from whom Schoenberg descended was Schoenberg's Brahms—a Brahms very compellingly (and influentially) reimagined in terms of the characteristics that linked their styles. Unlike his Wagnerian heritage, which he accepted as self-evident, Schoenberg very actively propounded his descent from Brahms. This gives us another opportunity to compare theory with practice. On one occasion, for example, asked in a radio talk to explain his own methods, Schoenberg responded by citing and analyzing the first theme from Brahms's F-major Cello Sonata, op. 99, a late work (composed in 1886) that Schoenberg, a cellist himself, had known when it was new and thought difficult to understand (Ex. 6-27).



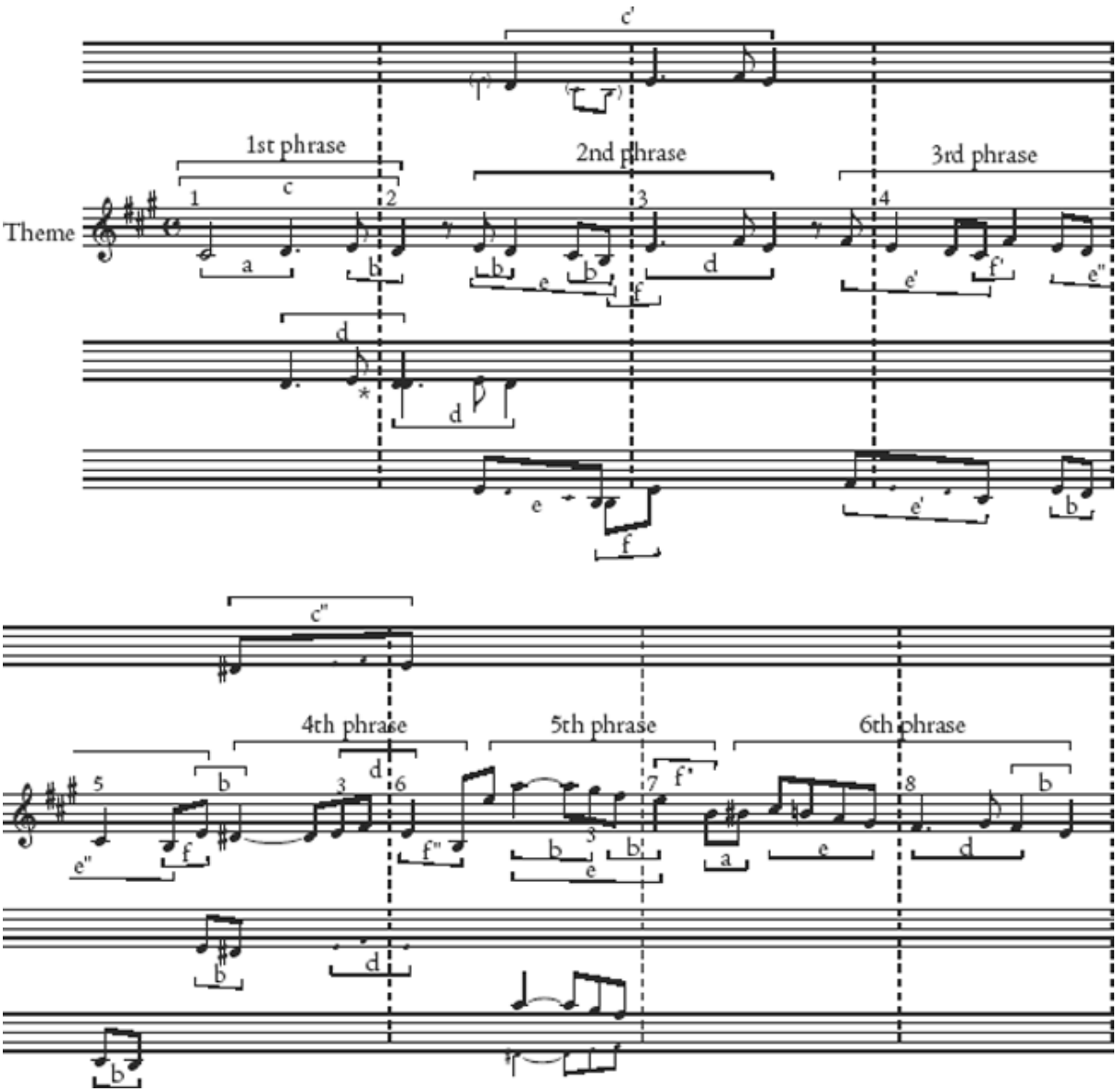
ex. 6-27 Johannes Brahms, Cello Sonata no. 2, Op. 99, first theme, as cited by Schoenberg

Schoenberg emphasized the way Brahms built up the theme by gradually expanding on the initial two-note group: first by reversing its contour and contracting it to a semitone; next by disjunctly linking two versions of the falling pair, the first expanded to a whole tone, and the second (evened out to vary the rhythm) expanded to a minor third, the sum of a semitone and a whole tone; next by linking two versions of the first (ascending) pair conjunctly (so that the middle note does double duty), and expanding the interval from a fourth to a sixth (the previous third, inverted); then ascending further (the interval between the two three-note groups inverting the already-repeated ascending fourth) and varying it with a fifth in place of the sixth; and finally, summarizing everything in a five-note phrase that ascends through a fourth, a sixth, and another fourth, then falls by a fifth (an inverted fourth), with the two longest notes, F and G, representing the falling seconds from before in an expanded inversion encompassing a ninth (which is also the largest interval previously achieved, in the fourth phrase).

We could retell this story even more "Schoenbergianly," perhaps, by putting it in reverse. Then it would more closely resemble the painstaking analysis given above of the little piano piece, op. 19, no. 1 (Ex. 6-13). Thus, if we take the concluding five-note phrase as a *Grundgestalt*, we could then systematically derive every previous (and succeeding) thematic event from it. The fact that in this case Schoenberg's practice seems to resemble his theory in reverse is significant; for his self-constructed link to Brahms was a classic case of reverse (or double-reverse) historical narration, reversing into forward motion a lineage that had originally been traced retrospectively.

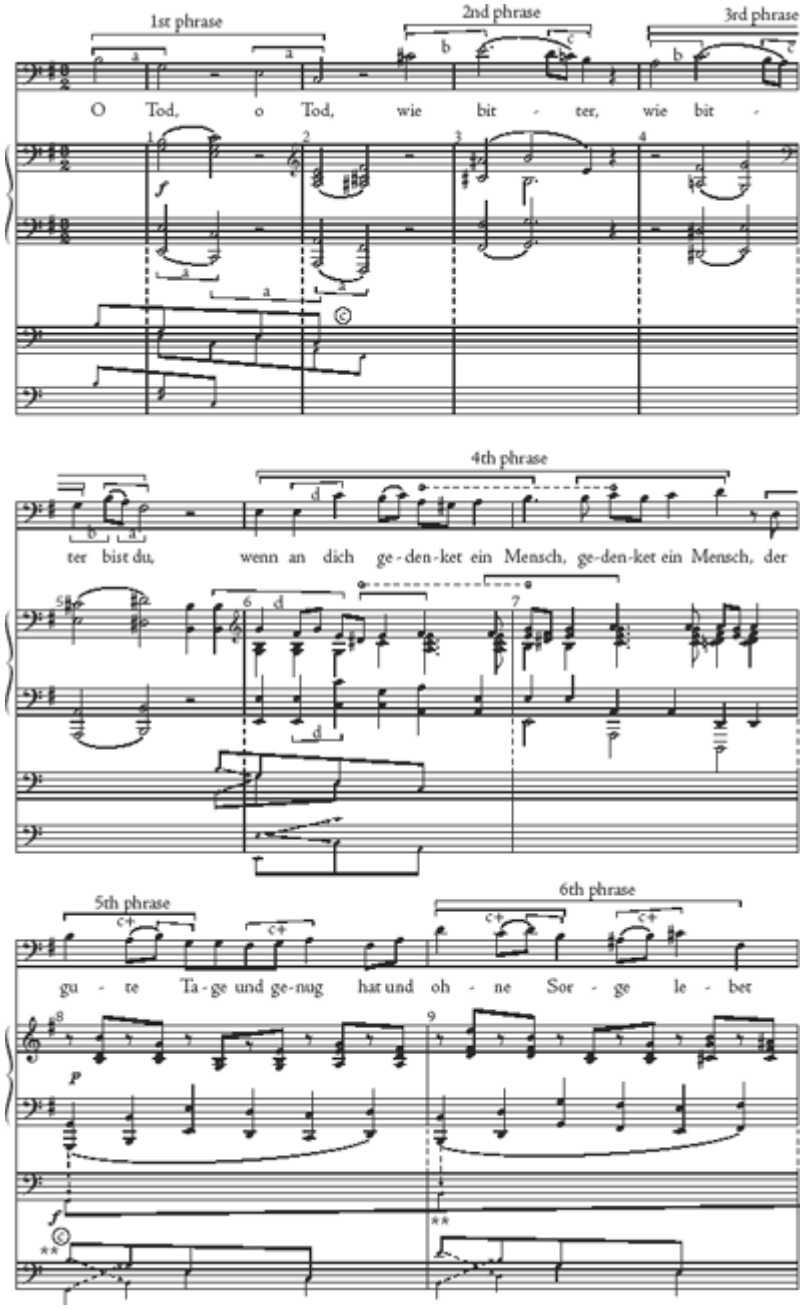
The most celebrated instance of this rhetorical ploy was another radio talk, given to mark the centenary of Brahms's birth in 1933 and significantly titled "Brahms the Progressive." In it, Schoenberg illustrated

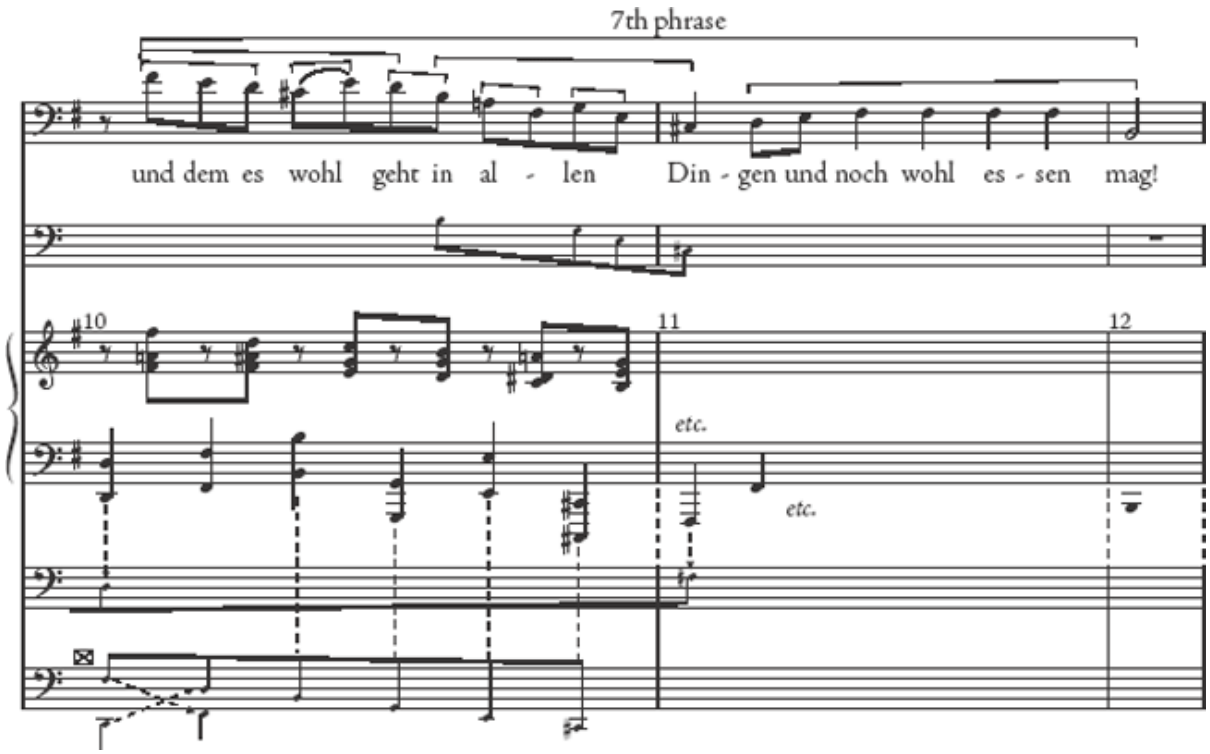
"developing variation" (the building up of larger musical entities from the endlessly varied repetition of smaller ones) by subjecting two themes of Brahms to a really atomistic analysis. First he showed how the theme from the slow movement of Brahms's String Quartet in A minor, op. 51, no. 2, could be derived from the tiniest particle, a two-note scalar descent labeled "a" in the diagram he drew up when revising the talk for publication in 1947 (Ex. 6-28). Again, the closest equivalent of the Schoenbergian *Grundgestalt* is not so much the two-note atom, but something a bit more characteristic—say perhaps the four–note "molecule" labeled "e" in the diagram. As the accompanying legend shows, "e" rather than "a" functions in context as a nexus set, relating all the others including the last.



ex. 6-28 Arnold Schoenberg's diagram of Brahms's Op. 51, no. 2 theme

Schoenberg's most famous Brahms analysis is the second one in "Brahms the Progressive." It concerns *O Tod* (O Death!), from Brahms's biblical cycle *Four Serious Songs*, op. 121 (1896), his last important composition. Its very telling analytical diagram is shown in Ex. 6-29; what it "tells" is how much more important the idea of motivic saturation was to Schoenberg, in analyzing Brahms, than were the guiding principles of voice leading and harmony that were likely paramount in Brahms's mind, as they would have been in the mind of any "tonal" composer.


1st phrase
2nd phrase
3rd phrase
O Tod, o Tod, wie bit - ter, wie bit -
4th phrase
ter bist du, wenn an dich ge-den-ket ein Mensch, ge-den-ket ein Mensch, der
5th phrase
6th phrase
gu - te Ta-ge und ge-nug hat und oh - ne Sor - ge le - bet



ex. 6-29 Arnold Schoenberg, analysis of "O Tod" from *Brahms the Progressive*

Note, for example, the apparent violence Schoenberg must do to the bass line in mm. 8–10 (reversing notes at will and selecting arbitrarily from the newly ordered result) in order to reproduce his motif "e," a pair of descending thirds outlining a seventh. Even more subtly and significantly revealing are the rising thirds labeled "b" in mm. 2–5. It is doubtful whether Brahms could have considered the quarter-eighth pair labeled "b" in m. 5, where the second note is a dissonant appoggiatura, to be the motivic equivalent of the similarly labeled pairs of half notes that precede it, where all the tones are "chord tones." Did Schoenberg really think that harmonic considerations—matters of consonance and dissonance—were no longer relevant to motivic identity in Brahms? Had Brahms already emancipated the dissonance?

Surely not, nor is it likely that Schoenberg really thought he had. Indeed, the emancipation of the dissonance was the one aspect of his own practice for which Schoenberg never claimed an explicit precedent in earlier music. But in a sense the claim he made in "Brahms the Progressive" was even bolder, and certainly more controversial. Calling Brahms a progressive was nothing if not polemical, since Brahms himself opposed the idea of musical progress that was proclaimed in his own day by the "young Hegelians" of the New German School. Calling him a progressive was Schoenberg's way of saying that Brahms, like any other great composer, served history's design willy-nilly.

What was progressive about Brahms, then, was the fact that he was in Schoenberg's view a Schoenberg-in-training or a Schoenberg-in-waiting, whose motivic webs foreshadowed Schoenberg's own in density. And to imply this much was further to imply that the emancipation of dissonance, Schoenberg's great "bursting of the bonds," was in a larger sense no break at all but rather the unique and necessary culmination of all previous musically progressive practice, realizing a historical tendency that Schoenberg was the first to identify and formulate explicitly, but which many historians, in thrall to his charisma, have since endorsed.

Notes:

(35) Quoted in Reich, *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, p. 49.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Alban Berg

Atonality

ONTOGENY BECOMES PHYLOGENY

Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

So compelling was the force of Schoenberg's musical example, for a time, that it prompted a widespread revision of music history in which Schoenberg's backward narrative bridge from himself to Brahms was not only "reversed into forward motion" but also generalized so that it became not the story of two composers or of a specific musical technique called developing variation, but the story of "Western music" itself. To recall high-school biology class, an "ontogeny," the individual development of a single member or representative of a type or species (here, Schoenberg) had been generalized into a "phylogeny," the historical development of the species itself.

Perhaps the first such generalizer was Schoenberg's pupil Berg, who in "Why Is Schoenberg's Music So Difficult to Understand?" drew a straight developmental line from Schoenberg back to Bach (but represented it as a line extending from Bach forward to Schoenberg). The most influential generalizer, however, was Schoenberg's other outstanding pupil, Webern, a trained musicologist as well as a composer and conductor, who embodied the new historical line both in words and in musical deed.

In a set of lectures given in 1933 (the same year as "Brahms the Progressive") and later published as *The Path to the New Music*, Webern asserted that "for the last quarter of a century major and minor have no longer existed, only most people still do not know it."[36] When originally uttered aloud, that remark could only have sounded like a partisan pronouncement. But over the years the idea of the *collapse of traditional tonality*[37] around 1907 or 1908 (the years that circumscribe the composing of Schoenberg's Second Quartet) has been turned into a "fact," indeed a standard cliché of music historiography.

The phrase in italics comes from a textbook published in 1991. The event in question, tonality's "collapse," had by then been long accepted by historians as an empirical fact. And yet it—obviously—never took place. To believe that it did is to commit an error that often attends the very beginning of the narrative of "Western music," namely the assumption that the rise of literacy put an end to "orality." Similarly, the "rise" of polyphony (another famous nonevent) is often thought to have put an end to "monophony" but didn't, any more than the "rise" of instrumental music put an end to vocal. Innovations add to the range of options available within an existing or traditional practice. They augment it, but (except in the utilitarian realm of technology) do not normally supplant it.

So it was with Schoenbergian "atonality." Since his time it has been an option, and a line of development that for a while commanded wide assent among modernist composers. But "tonal" music has obviously continued, both in oral and in literate practice, and still accounts for the vast preponderance of the music composed and performed in Europe and America. To claim that all of this music is based on premises that have long since "collapsed" is of course to stigmatize it. That is a rhetorical, rather than a historical, allegation. One name for it is propaganda.

Another is myth. The bald assertion of tonality's collapse or demise around 1908 is one of the myths of modernism, akin to Virginia Woolf's famous sentence (in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," an essay published in 1924) that "on or about April 1910 human nature changed." Both statements, which plainly (and deliberately) contradict ordinary experience, are examples of "hidden history," in which the inexplicable is

explained by reference to the occult, and in which ordinary experience is tainted as evidence of limited capacity (a technique well described by Hans Christian Andersen in his tale, "The Emperor's New Clothes").

To give the myth of tonality's collapse more historical credence, another myth was invented. It, too, went through a process of progressive generalization. A textbook of 1960 put it this way: "The whole course of late Romantic music, especially in Germany, tended toward atonality."[38] Many historians have since reconsidered the one-sidedness of such a description, even of Wagner, whose *Tristan und Isolde* is invariably cited as the "crisis" or precipitating work. Nevertheless, by 1991, the process of generalization had gone on apace. The textbook from which the myth of tonality's collapse was quoted continued in this fashion:

> Yet traditional tonality did not collapse all at once. The entire nineteenth century—arguably even the common-practice period as a whole—had witnessed a progressive weakening of its constructive force, along with corresponding shifts in compositional esthetic. Any effort to understand twentieth-century music must consider its relationship to these earlier developments out of which it grew, in part as their extension, in part as a set of new departures.[39]

These efforts have proceeded by compounding the myths just described—the hidden crisis, the "progressive weakening"—with the one cited earlier, the generalization of Schoenberg's retrospective claim of kinship with Brahms. The product of all this mythmaking has been an artificially sequent narrative that masquerades a particular result as a general necessity. In more specialized studies, the story is narrated in greater detail, but it retains its "synecdochic" character (that is, its substitution of parts for wholes). One of its most sophisticated formulations came in an extended study by the music theorist Joseph Straus called *Remaking the Past: Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition*, a book that amounted to a sustained gloss on "Brahms the Progressive." The late nineteenth century is characterized there

> as a period in which motivic association, a secondary and dependent determinant of structure in the classical and early romantic eras, was elevated into a central and independent organizing principle. Recent scholarship on late romantic music (particularly that of Wagner, Brahms, Liszt, and Mahler) has concentrated more and more on what [the music analyst] Allen Forte calls "the primal importance of the motive." In the music of this period, motivic structure waxes as tonal structure wanes.[40]

The particular version of the historiographical myth to which Straus makes reference by invoking Allen Forte is the one that (in Straus's words) traces "the growing importance of contextual motivic relations and their increasing independence from a tonal framework" in the music of the late nineteenth century. He calls this asserted process of development "motivicization," and claims that it was an aspect of common composerly practice in the period we have been calling "maximalist." To all of this commentary, one can make the same basic objection as one can make to Schoenberg's own analysis of Brahms's *O Tod*. The crucial "independence from a tonal framework" is a function not of the music analyzed—Wagner's, Brahms's, Liszt's, or Mahler's—but of the analytical technique that is brought to bear upon it.

As Schoenberg's purpose in anachronistically analyzing Brahms's music was the justification of his own, so the vast historiographical and analytical literature that has grown up in the wake of "Brahms the Progressive" has had the purpose and effect of turning Schoenberg's particular innovations into the general history of twentieth-century music, so that "each opus" of his, in the words of the conductor Robert Craft, "is a turning point in music itself."[41] They were that because in the retrospective view of his devotees, Schoenberg was uniquely responsive (and responsible) to what the German philosopher Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, in a book of 1949, finally called "the tendency of the musical material itself" and the historical obligations it imposed.[42] Webern, in his lectures of 1933, had already charged musicians who failed to recognize these obligations with "utter dilettantism."[43]

Notes:

(36) Webern, *The Path to the New Music*, p. 36.

(37) Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music*, p. 1.

(38) Donald Jay Grout, *A History of Western Music* (New York: Norton, 1960), p. 647.

(39) Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music*, pp. 1–2.

(40) Joseph N. Straus, *Remaking the Past: Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 22.

(41) Robert Craft, "Schoenberg's Five Pieces for Orchestra," in *Perspectives on Schoenberg and Stravinsky*, eds. Benjamin Boretz and Edward T. Cone (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 8.

(42) Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music* (1948), trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), p. 32ff.

(43) Webern, *The Path to the New Music*, p. 33.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

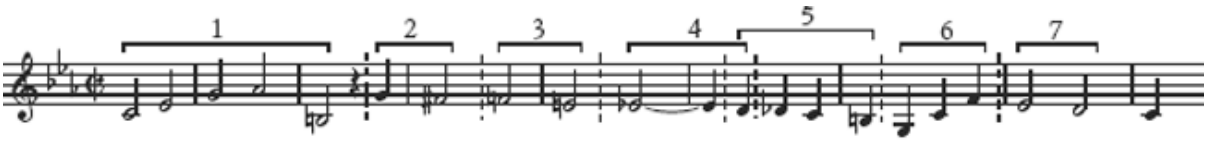
See also from Grove Music Online
Anton Webern

Motif

"MOTIVICIZATION" IN PRACTICE

Chapter: CHAPTER 6 Inner Occurrences (Transcendentalism, III)
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

That characteristic resort to browbeating was surely the least attractive product of modernist mythography. There were much more attractive ones. Webern gave a fascinating practical demonstration of how historiographical ideas can be translated into composerly procedures, when in 1934–1935 he transcribed for orchestra the six-part ricercar from Bach's *Musical Offering*. The most characteristic feature of the orchestration, and at the same time one of its more enigmatic traits, is the way Webern cut up (or, as music analysts would say, "segmented") the famous "royal" theme given Bach by Frederick the Great as a subject for improvisation. On its every appearance, the 8-measure theme is divided into seven timbrally differentiated parts, numbered for reference in Ex. 6-30.



1. Trombone	Horn	Trumpet	Horn / Harp	Trombone	Horn	Trumpet / Harp
2. Flute	Clarinet	Oboe	Clarinet / Harp	Flute	Clarinet	Oboe / Harp
3. Bass clarinet	Trombone	Bassoon	Trombone / Harp	Bass clarinet	Trombone	Bassoon / Harp
4. English horn	Horn	Bass clar.	Horn / Harp	English horn	Horn	Bass clarinet / Harp
5. Trumpet	Oboe	Clarinet	Oboe / Harp	Trumpet	Oboe	Clarinet / Harp
6. Bass clarinet	Bassoon	Cello	Bassoon / Harp	Bass clarinet	Cello	Bassoon / Harp
7. Oboe	Flute	Trumpet	Flute / Harp	Oboe	Flute	Trumpet / Harp

ex. 6-30 Theme from Bach's Six-part Ricercar as segmented by Anton Webern

At first blush we are apt to notice nothing more than the seemingly arbitrary shifts of timbre. We may be inclined to write it off as another attempt at *Klangfarbenmelodie*, "tone-color melody," or attribute it to Webern's penchant for what was sometimes called his "pointillism," with reference to the French postimpressionist painterly technique of applying color in little daubs that contrast close up but blend when viewed from afar. When all the voices get going in Webern's scoring, and with all the countersubjects given a treatment just as pointillistic as the subject gets, the kaleidoscopic effect is indeed entrancing.

But a closer look reveals something else as well. The colors do not only contrast; they also recur in a consistent pattern whenever the theme is sounded. Thus segments 1 and 5 are assigned to the same instrument on every appearance of the theme (first the muted trombone, then the flute, then the bass clarinet, then the English horn, and so on), as are segments 2 and 6 (first the muted horn, then clarinet, muted trombone, “open” horn, etc.). The constant use of the harp as a doubling instrument in segments 4 and 7 consistently associates them with one another, as well as with segment 2, which uses the color the harp doubles in segment 4, and segment 3, which uses the color doubled by the harp in segment 7. (Sharp-eyed readers will notice that the assignment of the cello to motif 6 and bassoon to motive 7 in the sixth line of Ex. 6-30 reverses the established pattern. The example is accurate: the apparent “error” was Webern’s.)

If we now notice that the two segments doubled by the harp (4 and 7) are identical in pitch content (E♭ descending to D), we have made an association between color and motif—the first of many. This observation turns out to coincide with Webern’s compositional strategy, as we learn in a letter he sent the conductor Hermann Scherchen, who was preparing the first performance in 1938. “My instrumentation attempts to reveal the motivic coherence” of the ricercar, he wrote.[44] Knowing this much prompts an analytical strategy. Replacing the word “segment” with “motif,” then, we may survey Webern’s achievement thus:

• The next logical step is to observe that the two motifs associated by harp-doubling with the two identical ones, namely 2 and 3, also consist (like motives 4 and 7) of descending semitones.

• Turning our attention next to all the motifs that share the color doubled by the harp in segment 4—namely segments 2, 4, and 6—we notice a pair of subtle interrelationships. First, motifs 4 + 6 reproduce motifs 6 + 7 in reverse order. Second, motifs 2 and 4 connect over an augmented second, which is the inversion of the diminished seventh at the end of motif 1, surely the most characteristic interval in the theme.

• Not only that, but the contents of motifs 2 (G + F♯) and 4 (E♭ + D) can be replicated within motif 1 at a transposition of a fourth (or fifth, depending on direction): C, B, A♭, G; and now remember that the second entry (or “answer”) in a fugue or ricercar is at that very transposition, so that the next time motif 1 is heard, it will use the pitches of motifs 2 and 4.

• And of course anything said about motifs 2 + 4 can also be said about motifs 2 + 7.

• Meanwhile, motifs 3 + 7 (associated by color) equal motifs 3 + 4 (associated by contiguity), and also equal motifs 2 + 3 at a transposition of a second. Putting this another way, one can say that motif 3 is to motif 2 what motif 4 (or 7) is to motif 3. And is it a coincidence that motifs 3 + 2, or 4 + 3 are transpositions of the famous B-A-C-H cipher?

• And by the same token, motif 5, which covers four descending half steps, equals motifs 2 + 3 + 4(= 7).

• Finally, motif 1, the longest of the motifs and the most characteristic, being the famous *Kopfmotiv* or head motif of the royal theme, summarizes all the intervallic relationships we have noted in the others. Its extremes, C and B, encompassing a descending semitone, reproduce the contiguous contents of motifs 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7; and its third and fourth notes (G + A♭) invert the same interval. Its final interval inverts the nexus of motifs 2 and 4 (associated by color). Its second and fifth notes coincide with the odd interval (a diminished fourth) that defines the contour of motifs 4 + 5, which fill the interval in by a scalewise chromatic descent; and the consonant fifth that stands at the extremities of the opening key-defining triad is inverted and sequentially repeated in motif 6.

Since everything that happens later can be derived from it, motif 1 can be defined as the *Grundgestalt* of the ricercar, and all the succeeding motifs—indeed the whole ricercar—can be viewed as its “developing variations.” Our heads may be swimming at this point the way they were on concluding the analysis of Ex. 6-13, the first tiny piano piece from Schoenberg’s op. 19. And no wonder, for by dint of his atomistic rescoring of the ricercar Webern has managed to cast Bach, as Schoenberg had already cast Brahms, as a Schoenberg-in-training. Even more to the point, not a few decades but a full two centuries of music history have been cast as prelude to the emancipation of dissonance, which finally freed from all irrelevant constraints the kind of motivic writing Webern has elevated to a primary compositional objective of Bach’s, and an immanent feature of his music (which it took Webern’s interpretation fully to “reveal”).

And yet it should be clear by now that what we have witnessed has been less a revelation than a revision of Bach’s priorities, and that the historical precedent that Webern has cited was in fact of his own ingenious devising. It should also be obvious that refuting the historical claims made by composers or arrangers does not amount (in itself, anyway) to a refutation, or even so much as a comment, on the artistic value of the work they have produced. As listeners, we are perfectly free to welcome Webern’s commitment to pseudohistorical fiction (to put it as bluntly as possible) if we take pleasure in the artistic result.

As historians, we are obliged to be more wary. But we are also obliged to take note of the fiction, since once it was adopted it made real history. Like the dicta of the old New German School, of which it was in its way a maximalization, this strain of tendentious twentieth-century music historiography became in its own right a significant and influential aspect of twentieth-century musical thought. As many of the chapters that follow will attest, it has had a decided impact on the histories of composition, performance, and audience reception, none of which can be fully understood without reference to it.

Mere refutation, then, can never suffice to dispel a mythology. Attention must be paid. The myths must be accounted for, above all as sociological phenomena with ramifications leading beyond music, and beyond esthetics, into matters of general philosophy, history, and politics.

Notes:

(44) Quoted in Hans Moldenhauer and Rosaleen Moldenhauer, *Anton von Webern: A Chronicle of His Life and Work* (New York: Knopf, 1979), p. 444.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

CHAPTER 7 Social Validation

BartóK, Janáček

Chapter: CHAPTER 7 Social Validation
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

WHAT IS HUNGARIAN?

Of all the non-Germanic nations within the polyglot Hapsburg Empire, the Hungarians—or Magyars, to name them in their own exotic tongue of proud Central Asian descent—were the most successful in maintaining a distinct political, linguistic, and cultural identity during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They had a history of independence, and an indigenous dynastic aristocracy—recall the Eszterházy family, Haydn's employers—whose hereditary rights the Austrian rulers were for the most part careful to respect. In return for that respect they earned loyalty. For many Magyars, Austrian suzerainty meant liberation and protection from the Turks. It also promised the reunification, even the enlargement, of the old Hungarian kingdom, a process that was completed in 1711.

The Austrian emperor was at first only nominally the king of the Magyars, who maintained their traditional social administration, centered on large and politically autonomous baronial counties and estates like Eszterháza. Ironically enough, real political strife with the Austrians only began with the reformist reign of Joseph II (r. 1765–90), often regarded as the most liberal of the Hapsburg emperors; for among Joseph's reforms was the centralization of the imperial government, which threatened the autonomy of the Hungarian counties. (Among other things, the proposed reforms would have made German the only legal language in the empire.) The solution sought by the Hungarian nobles was a constitution that would guarantee their rights as citizens. Thus Hungarian nationalism was joined in an especially conspicuous way with political liberalism—or at least what passed for liberalism within a basically feudal context.

fig. 7-1 Lajos Kossuth, by Francis d'Avignon.

Matters flared briefly into armed conflict in 1849. Lajos (or Louis) Kossuth (1802–94), a zealous politician unsatisfied with the parliamentary government granted by the Austrians the previous year (in which he was the finance minister), declared a Magyar republic with himself as president. He was beset with rebellions from the large German, Slavic, and Romanian minorities, who felt secure under Austrian imperial rule and feared repression at the hands of Magyar nationalists. These uprisings, plus the intervention of Russia on the side of its sister empire, forced Kossuth into exile—and into legend as a martyr to the cause of freedom. He lived on for more than forty years, mainly in England and Italy. A fiery orator, he made several lucrative speaking trips to the United States, where he was billed as the Hungarian Patrick Henry or Nathan Hale. Shortly before his death he was given amnesty, which he refused. Nevertheless, his body was returned to Budapest and given a heroic burial.

For a while after Kossuth's attempted revolution, Hungary suffered reprisals and was ruled like an occupied territory. That only made nationalistic aspirations seethe. A compromise—the great *Ausgleich*, or settlement—was reached after the Austrian crown suffered a military defeat at the hands of the Prussians in 1866, and needed to regain the loyalty of its minorities. Hungary was granted its own constitution, its own parliament, its own legal code in its own language, its own currency and postal system, and what is more,

political dominance over many of the other non-German parts of the empire, including Slovakia, the Balkan regions of Slovenia and Croatia, Transylvania (a partly Romanian- speaking district in the Carpathians) and Ruthenia (where the local population spoke Ukrainian). All of these territories and more were now administered not from Vienna but from Budapest.

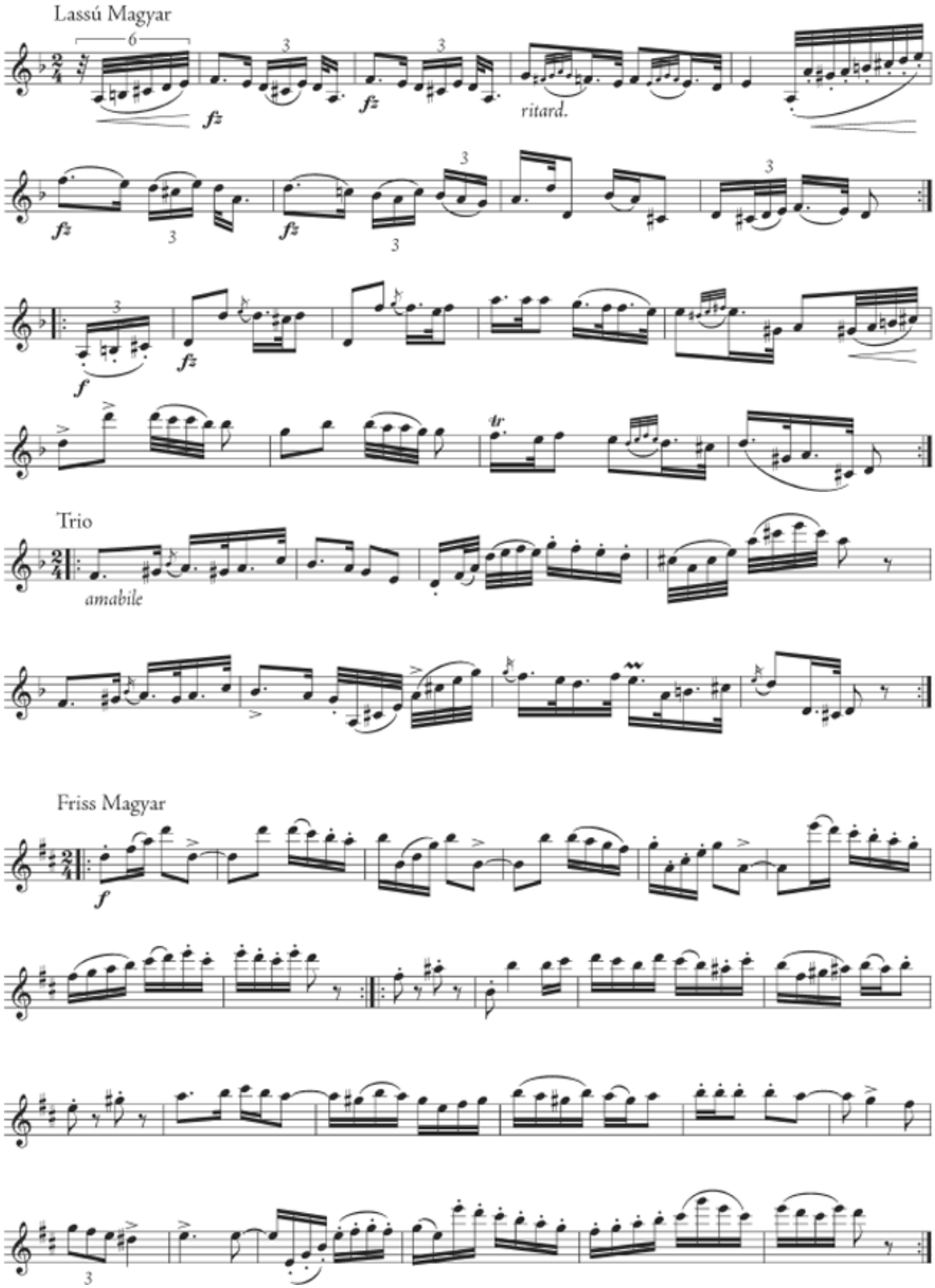
The emperor Franz Joseph I, already in the nineteenth year of his reign, came to Budapest to be separately crowned King of Hungary in 1867, and his empire officially became "Austria-Hungary." His title became "Seine kaiserliche und königliche Majestät" ("His imperial and royal majesty") in specific recognition of Hungary's nearly coequal status, and "k.u.k." became the official designation of all the centralized institutions that remained, notably the armed forces. Yet although it was widely heralded as a victory for the Hungarian nation, the *Ausgleich* once again mainly served the political and economic interests of the nobility and the *haute bourgeoisie* ("urban elite class").

As long as Austria-Hungary lasted, the voting population of the Hungarian sector never exceeded six percent, and the proportion of titled aristocrats to the total population was the highest in Europe. The *Ausgleich* did not still bourgeois nationalism; indeed, Hungarian nationalism became a complicated and contentious thing, with many classes within a rigidly stratified society claiming to be the "true" Hungarian nation. Self-avowed nationalist politics covered the whole political spectrum from aristocratic reaction to revolutionary socialism.

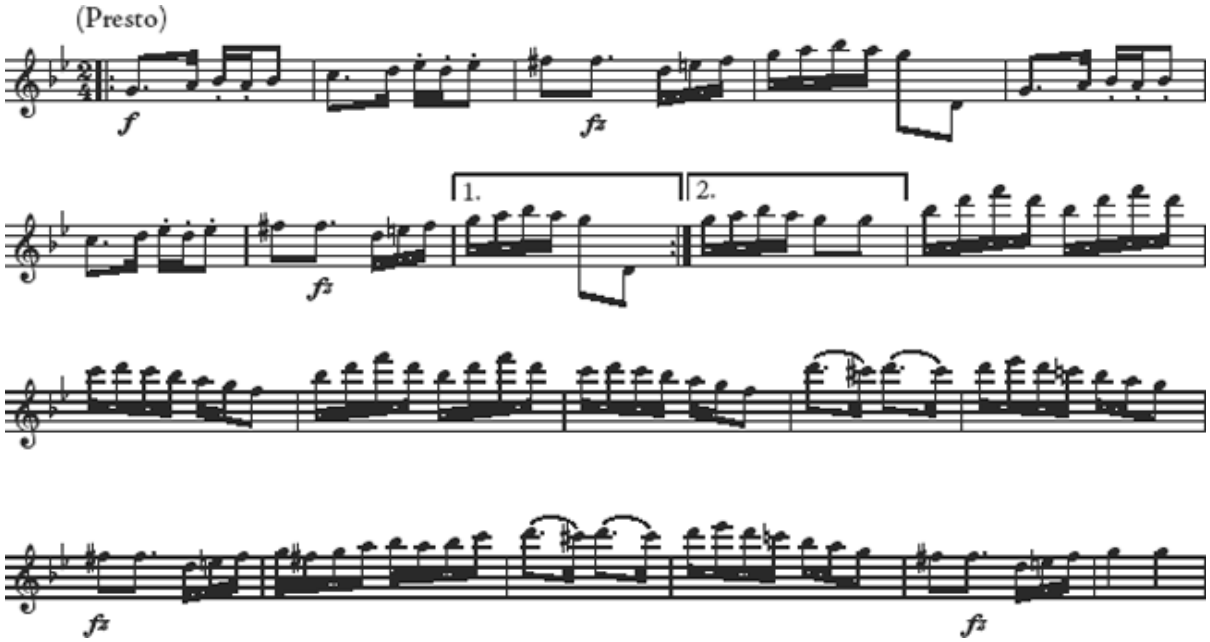
Like its political counterpart, cultural nationalism and its reflections in the arts burgeoned and fermented as the turn of century approached, and reached in the early decades of the new century a maximalist phase that looked like a modernist revolution. In music, the change was especially pronounced: a new model of "Hungarianness," entailing a new source in folklore and a new musical style, was advanced, and correlated with other, more cosmopolitan manifestations of modernist style. In no other country did modernism so successfully ally itself with domestic (as opposed to exotic) nationalism. The qualification is necessary because we have encountered a seemingly similar alliance in Russian music like Stravinsky's. But that was an alliance of expedience, made strictly for export purposes, and addressed a foreign audience. The new Hungarian product arose in response to needs at home, and had far less to do with the merchandising of exoticism.

The old Hungarian nobility had long "possessed" (i.e., patronized and cultivated) a distinctive music, the so-called *magyar nóta* ("Hungarian tune"), which in educated Hungarian circles was regarded as a stylistic emblem of the national identity. It was also recognized abroad by composers, at first chiefly Viennese, who occasionally imitated it for effect, and by their audiences, who relished it as the *style hongrois* ("Hungarian style"). It was also known, especially abroad, as the "Gypsy style," because outside of Hungary (and in Hungarian urban centers as well) it was known mainly through performances by Gypsy violinists, whose distinctive playing style—heavily inflected with emotionally laden sforzandos, glissandos, and rubatos—was an integral part of the experience.

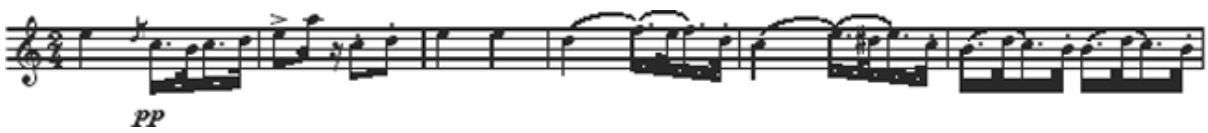
Ex. 7-1 begins with an actual *magyar nóta*, written down in a manner that tries to convey something of its performance style and published as a piano solo in 1832. (Only the right-hand part, containing the melody, is given.) Like most published *magyar nótak*, it has two linked parts, slow (*lassú*) and fast (*friss*). Next comes a little garland of Viennese imitations (of either the *lassú* or the *friss*), beginning with a pair of extracts from the earliest famous one, the "Rondo all'ongarese" ("Rondo in Hungarian style") that caps a piano trio by Haydn, first published in 1795.



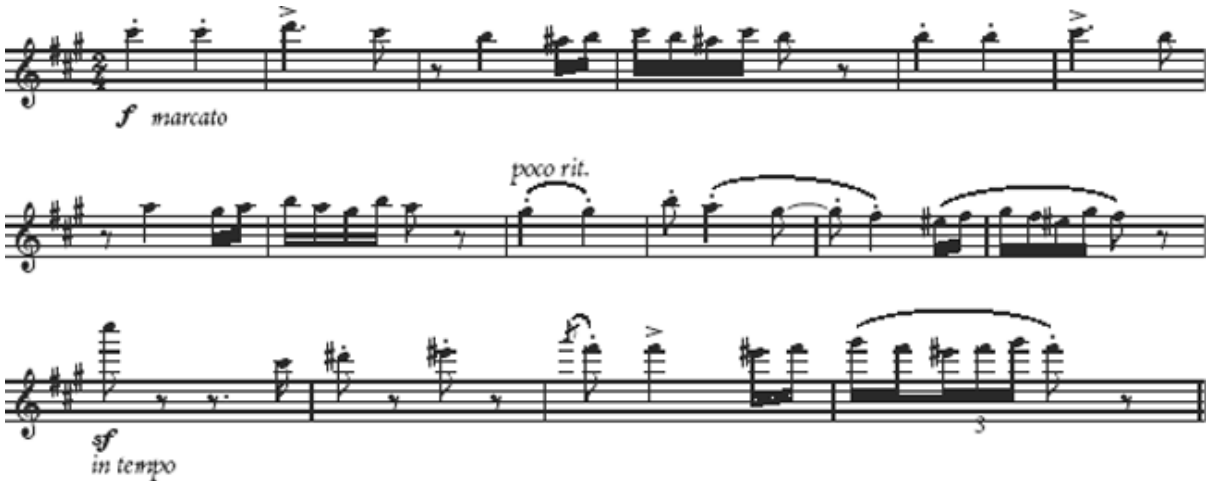
ex. 7-1a *Magyar nóta* and *style hongrois*, Ignác Ruzitska, *Búcsuzó és friss magyar* (Farewell and Fast Hungarian)



ex. 7-1b *Magyar nóta* and *style hongrois*, Franz Joseph Haydn, *Rondo all'ongarese*, the last minore (piano right hand)



ex. 7-1c *Magyar nóta* and *style hongrois*, Franz Schubert, "Great" Symphony in C, II, mm. 160–166 (oboe)



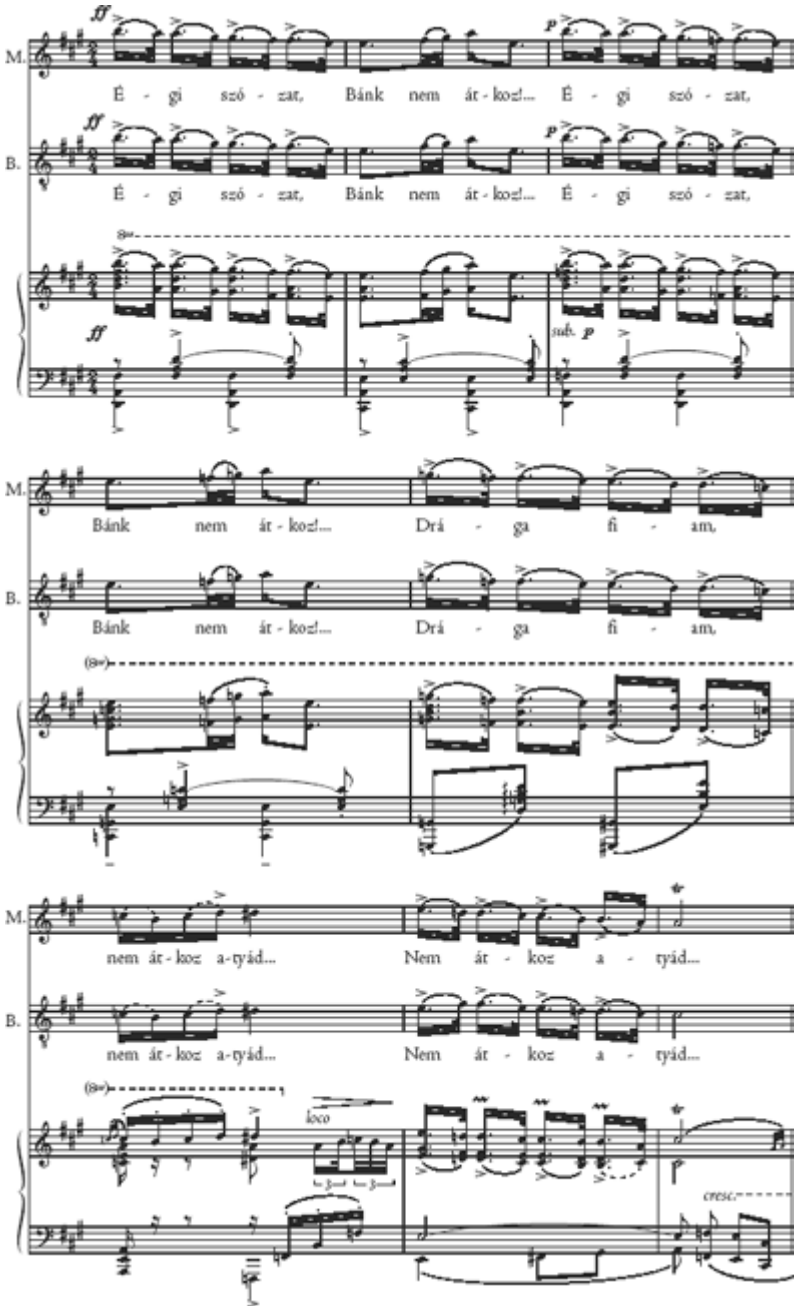
ex. 7-1d *Magyar nóta* and *style hongrois*, Johannes Brahms, Hungarian Dance no. 5 (1869), mm. 33–48 (Primo right hand)

From these examples, many (though not all) of the characteristics of the *style hongrois* can be deduced: dotted rhythms, syncopations, augmented seconds, distinctive cadence patterns, and so forth. Apart from the cadence patterns, perhaps, none of these characteristics were uniquely the property of the *style hongrois*. Like most stylistic "signifiers," it was not a single trait but a pliable cluster. That gave it great flexibility: two

melodies could be equally obvious exemplifications of the Hungarian cluster without necessarily having any specific traits in common.

Of course there was also a native Hungarian "school" of composers who employed the *magyar nóta* style in works cast in the larger vocal and instrumental forms of European art music. One was Mihály Mosonyi (1815–70), who was given the name Michael Brand at birth, but who translated it into its Hungarian equivalent as an act of patriotism. He composed two symphonies, a piano concerto, a large number of chamber and piano works, and three operas, all with the avowed purpose of "creating, alongside the German, Italian, and French currents in music, a fourth world-famous style, the Hungarian,"[1] but he never gained the sort of international reputation that would have realized such an ambition.

By common consent the "national composer" of Hungary during the nineteenth century was Franz (or Ferenc) Erkel (1810–93), an opera specialist, whose "historical dramatic opera" *Bánk bán* (1861) occupied a hallowed place in Hungarian culture analogous to that of Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* in Russia. The patriotic play by József Katona on which it was based, written in 1815, was twice banned by the Austrian censors for the way it used a thirteenth-century revolt against foreign infiltration as an allegory of contemporary Hungarian resistance to the Hapsburgs. Ex. 7-2 shows the climax of a tragic duet between the title character (heroic tenor), and his doomed wife Melinda. The *magyar nóta* idiom here assumes a high dramatic posture, in which the dominating musical figures are descending dotted sequences typical of Gypsy violin music, and "noble" short-long rhythms derived from the distinctive accentual patterns of the Hungarian language.



ex. 7-2 Franz Erkel, *Bánk bán*, Act II, scene 1, duet

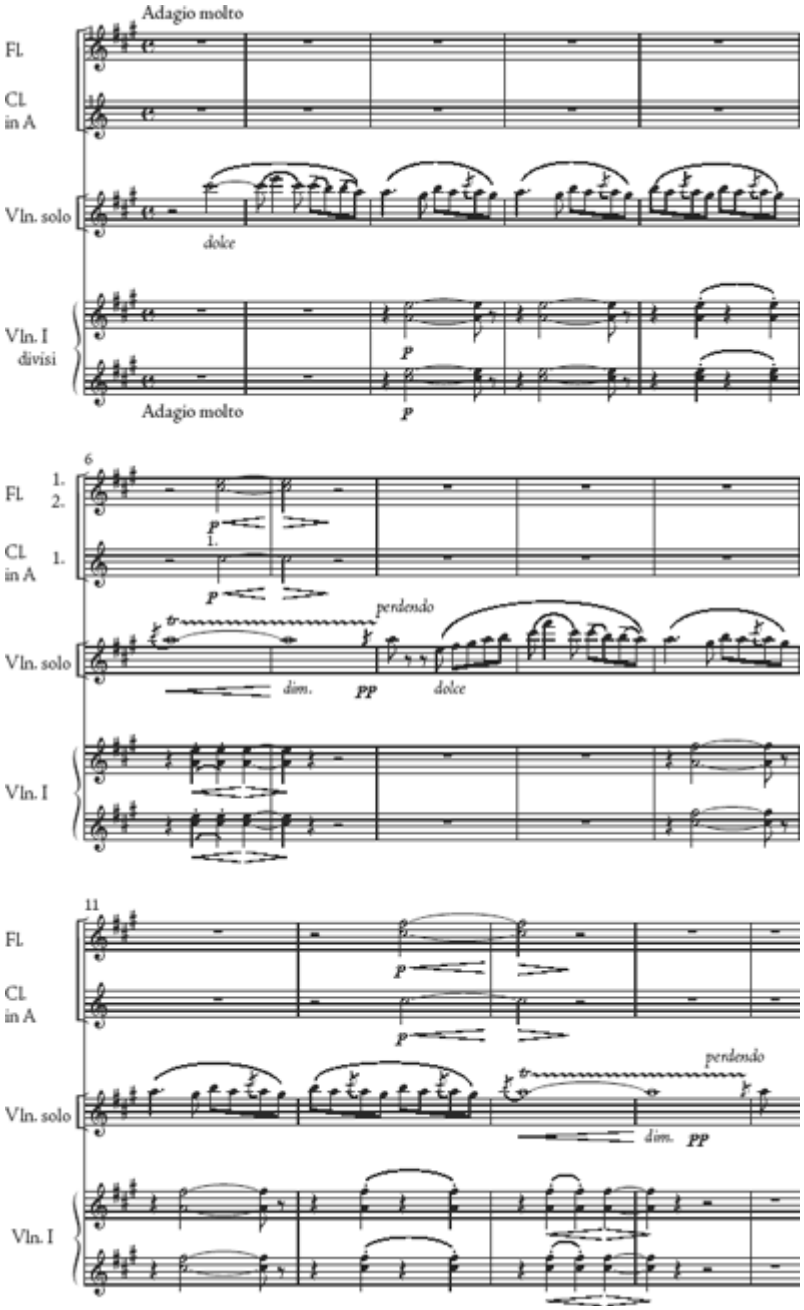
Inevitably, though, the greatest figure associated with the *style hongrois* in the nineteenth century, and its chief ambassador to the world at large, was Franz Liszt. Although he was surely the most cosmopolitan of all musicians, and the adopted standard bearer for the New German School with its universalist agenda, Liszt was nevertheless of Hungarian birth, and eager to take creative (and commercial) advantage of the fact. Most of his compositions in the *style hongrois* were virtuoso vehicles—nineteen Hungarian Rhapsodies, a *Hungarian Fantasia* with orchestra, and the like—in which he translated the Gypsy violin idiom, just as he had the Paganini idiom, into perfect keyboardese (replete with tremolo effects to evoke the accompanying *cimbalom* or Hungarian dulcimer).

Later in life, Liszt occasionally used the idiom more "seriously," as in a set of *Hungarian Historical Portraits* for piano (composed between 1870 and 1885) dedicated to seven Hungarian patriots (including Mosonyi, but not the still-banned Kossuth), or the grandiose *Hungarian Coronation Mass* for soloists, chorus, and orchestra, expressly composed for the separate crowning of Franz Joseph in 1867. The Hungarian coloring in

the Mass is most pronounced precisely at the most solemn moment, the Benedictus, where (following the exalted example of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*) Liszt entrusted a wordless prayer (already heard in the Offertory) to the solo violin (Ex. 7-3).

Previously, Liszt had written (or had his companion, Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein write) a substantial book, *Des bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* (1859, published in English as *The Gipsy in Music*), in which he characterized the *style hongrois* as "a great movement" in art, on an expressive and formal par with all other European musics. This was one of the classic statements for music of Johann Gottfried von Herder's early Romantic ideal—or the old Herderian ambivalence which insisted on assigning equal value both to the specific idiosyncrasies and to the common humanity of all particular cultures. The purpose of writing the book was to explicate an exotic idiom that European audiences might find baffling, and at the same time to celebrate and demonstrate its universal validity. The chief merit of the music, and for a romantic there could be no higher one, was its immediacy and authenticity of expression. "In the very act of passing the bow across the violin-strings," Liszt enthused, "a natural inspiration suggested itself; and, without any search for them, there came rhythms, cadences, modulations, melodies and tonal discourses." The Gypsy violinist "revealed that golden ray of interior light proper to himself, which otherwise the world would never have known or suspected." Hungary's role, in Liszt's view, was nurturing rather than creative; but that was enough to make the Gypsy idiom truly Hungarian.

> The Gypsy art can never be separated from Hungary, whose arms it must forever bear on seal and banner. To Hungary it owes a life passed entirely within its limits and in its atmosphere. To Hungary also the attainment of its virility and maturity are due, dependent as these were upon appreciation of its noble elements. It has also Hungary to thank for supply of its greatest needs—comprehension and sympathy. The haughtiness of its rhythms, their imposing dignity and sudden cries, remindful of those of a startled steed at sound of the trumpet—all from the very first, went straight to the Hungarian heart.[2]



ex. 7-3 Franz Liszt, *Hungarian Coronation Mass*, violin solo from Benedictus

Jonathan Bellman, a historian of the *style hongrois*, has pointed out that by attributing the actual origin of the *magyar nóta* to the Gypsies, rather than just its propagation through performance, Liszt committed an offensive error in Hungarian eyes. As Bellman put it, "Hungary only understood the rhythms, in Liszt's view—it did not produce them."[3] And yet the Hungarian language, in which every word (even foreign ones) are pronounced with a strong accent on the first syllable, seems the obvious source of those "haughty rhythms" Liszt celebrated. Liszt, who was brought up speaking German and who made French, the international tongue of European aristocracy and diplomacy, the vehicle of his mature career, was never fluent in the vernacular of the country of his birth and may not have been equipped to appreciate its relationship to the music he described. But he got the part about haughtiness right; for that is the aristocratic posture par excellence, and as we know, the *magyar nóta* was most actively patronized and promoted by the Hungarian gentry or small-landowner class.

Notes:

(1) Ferenc Bónis, "Mosonyi, Mihály," in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. XVII (2nd ed.; New York: Grove, 2001), p. 184.

(2) Franz Liszt, *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* (1859); quoted in Jonathan Bellman, *The* Style Hongrois *in the Music of Western Europe* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), p. 179.

(3) Bellman, *Style Hongrois*, p. 179.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

CHAPTER 7 Social Validation

BartóK, Janáček

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WHAT IS HUNGARIAN?

Of all the non-Germanic nations within the polyglot Hapsburg Empire, the Hungarians—or Magyars, to name them in their own exotic tongue of proud Central Asian descent—were the most successful in maintaining a distinct political, linguistic, and cultural identity during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They had a history of independence, and an indigenous dynastic aristocracy—recall the Eszterházy family, Haydn's employers—whose hereditary rights the Austrian rulers were for the most part careful to respect. In return for that respect they earned loyalty. For many Magyars, Austrian suzerainty meant liberation and protection from the Turks. It also promised the reunification, even the enlargement, of the old Hungarian kingdom, a process that was completed in 1711.

The Austrian emperor was at first only nominally the king of the Magyars, who maintained their traditional social administration, centered on large and politically autonomous baronial counties and estates like Eszterháza. Ironically enough, real political strife with the Austrians only began with the reformist reign of Joseph II (r. 1765–90), often regarded as the most liberal of the Hapsburg emperors; for among Joseph's reforms was the centralization of the imperial government, which threatened the autonomy of the Hungarian counties. (Among other things, the proposed reforms would have made German the only legal language in the empire.) The solution sought by the Hungarian nobles was a constitution that would guarantee their rights as citizens. Thus Hungarian nationalism was joined in an especially conspicuous way with political liberalism—or at least what passed for liberalism within a basically feudal context.

fig. 7-1 Lajos Kossuth, by Francis d'Avignon.

Matters flared briefly into armed conflict in 1849. Lajos (or Louis) Kossuth (1802–94), a zealous politician unsatisfied with the parliamentary government granted by the Austrians the previous year (in which he was the finance minister), declared a Magyar republic with himself as president. He was beset with rebellions from the large German, Slavic, and Romanian minorities, who felt secure under Austrian imperial rule and feared repression at the hands of Magyar nationalists. These uprisings, plus the intervention of Russia on the side of its sister empire, forced Kossuth into exile—and into legend as a martyr to the cause of freedom. He lived on for more than forty years, mainly in England and Italy. A fiery orator, he made several lucrative speaking trips to the United States, where he was billed as the Hungarian Patrick Henry or Nathan Hale. Shortly before his death he was given amnesty, which he refused. Nevertheless, his body was returned to Budapest and given a heroic burial.

For a while after Kossuth's attempted revolution, Hungary suffered reprisals and was ruled like an occupied territory. That only made nationalistic aspirations seethe. A compromise—the great *Ausgleich*, or settlement—was reached after the Austrian crown suffered a military defeat at the hands of the Prussians in 1866, and needed to regain the loyalty of its minorities. Hungary was granted its own constitution, its own parliament, its own legal code in its own language, its own currency and postal system, and what is more,

political dominance over many of the other non-German parts of the empire, including Slovakia, the Balkan regions of Slovenia and Croatia, Transylvania (a partly Romanian- speaking district in the Carpathians) and Ruthenia (where the local population spoke Ukrainian). All of these territories and more were now administered not from Vienna but from Budapest.

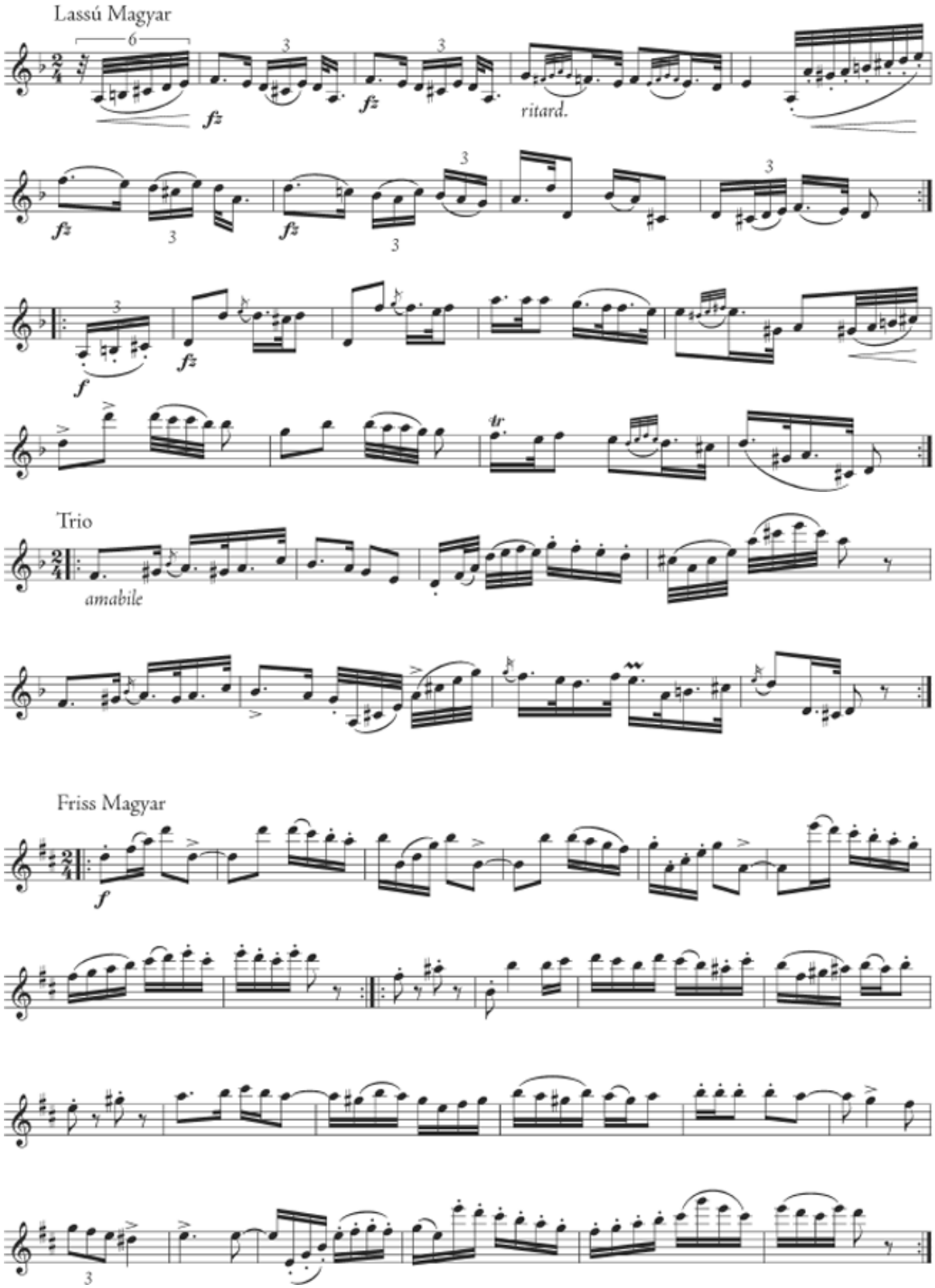
The emperor Franz Joseph I, already in the nineteenth year of his reign, came to Budapest to be separately crowned King of Hungary in 1867, and his empire officially became "Austria-Hungary." His title became "Seine kaiserliche und königliche Majestät" ("His imperial and royal majesty") in specific recognition of Hungary's nearly coequal status, and "k.u.k." became the official designation of all the centralized institutions that remained, notably the armed forces. Yet although it was widely heralded as a victory for the Hungarian nation, the *Ausgleich* once again mainly served the political and economic interests of the nobility and the *haute bourgeoisie* ("urban elite class").

As long as Austria-Hungary lasted, the voting population of the Hungarian sector never exceeded six percent, and the proportion of titled aristocrats to the total population was the highest in Europe. The *Ausgleich* did not still bourgeois nationalism; indeed, Hungarian nationalism became a complicated and contentious thing, with many classes within a rigidly stratified society claiming to be the "true" Hungarian nation. Self-avowed nationalist politics covered the whole political spectrum from aristocratic reaction to revolutionary socialism.

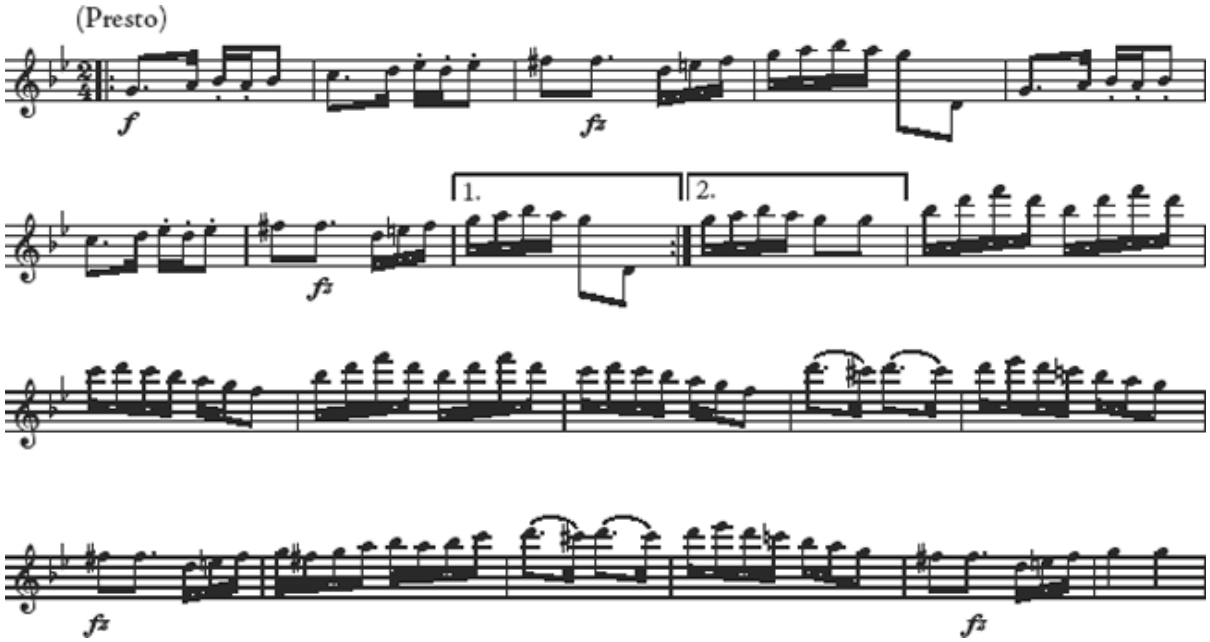
Like its political counterpart, cultural nationalism and its reflections in the arts burgeoned and fermented as the turn of century approached, and reached in the early decades of the new century a maximalist phase that looked like a modernist revolution. In music, the change was especially pronounced: a new model of "Hungarianness," entailing a new source in folklore and a new musical style, was advanced, and correlated with other, more cosmopolitan manifestations of modernist style. In no other country did modernism so successfully ally itself with domestic (as opposed to exotic) nationalism. The qualification is necessary because we have encountered a seemingly similar alliance in Russian music like Stravinsky's. But that was an alliance of expedience, made strictly for export purposes, and addressed a foreign audience. The new Hungarian product arose in response to needs at home, and had far less to do with the merchandising of exoticism.

The old Hungarian nobility had long "possessed" (i.e., patronized and cultivated) a distinctive music, the so-called *magyar nóta* ("Hungarian tune"), which in educated Hungarian circles was regarded as a stylistic emblem of the national identity. It was also recognized abroad by composers, at first chiefly Viennese, who occasionally imitated it for effect, and by their audiences, who relished it as the *style hongrois* ("Hungarian style"). It was also known, especially abroad, as the "Gypsy style," because outside of Hungary (and in Hungarian urban centers as well) it was known mainly through performances by Gypsy violinists, whose distinctive playing style—heavily inflected with emotionally laden sforzandos, glissandos, and rubatos—was an integral part of the experience.

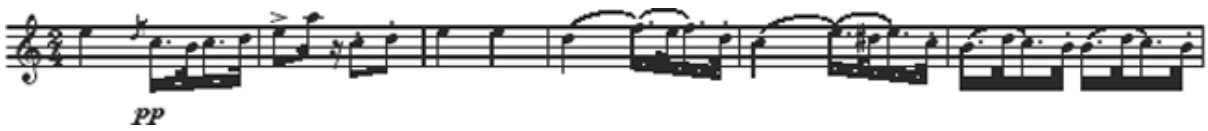
Ex. 7-1 begins with an actual *magyar nóta*, written down in a manner that tries to convey something of its performance style and published as a piano solo in 1832. (Only the right-hand part, containing the melody, is given.) Like most published *magyar nótak*, it has two linked parts, slow (*lassú*) and fast (*friss*). Next comes a little garland of Viennese imitations (of either the *lassú* or the *friss*), beginning with a pair of extracts from the earliest famous one, the "Rondo all'ongarese" ("Rondo in Hungarian style") that caps a piano trio by Haydn, first published in 1795.



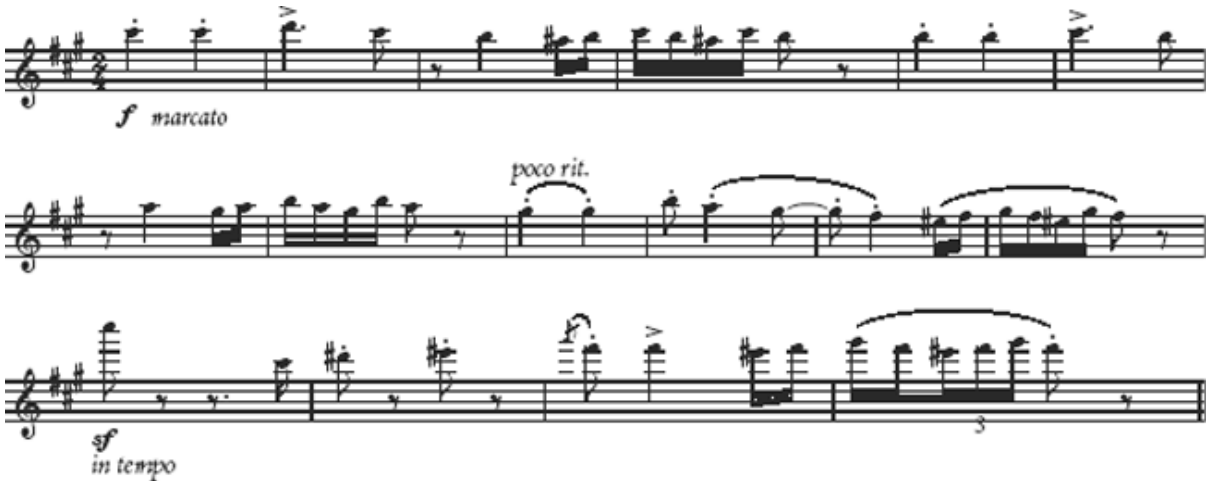
ex. 7-1a *Magyar nóta* and *style hongrois*, Ignác Ruzitska, *Búcsuzó és friss magyar* (Farewell and Fast Hungarian)



ex. 7-1b *Magyar nóta* and *style hongrois*, Franz Joseph Haydn, *Rondo all'ongarese*, the last minore (piano right hand)



ex. 7-1c *Magyar nóta* and *style hongrois*, Franz Schubert, "Great" Symphony in C, II, mm. 160–166 (oboe)



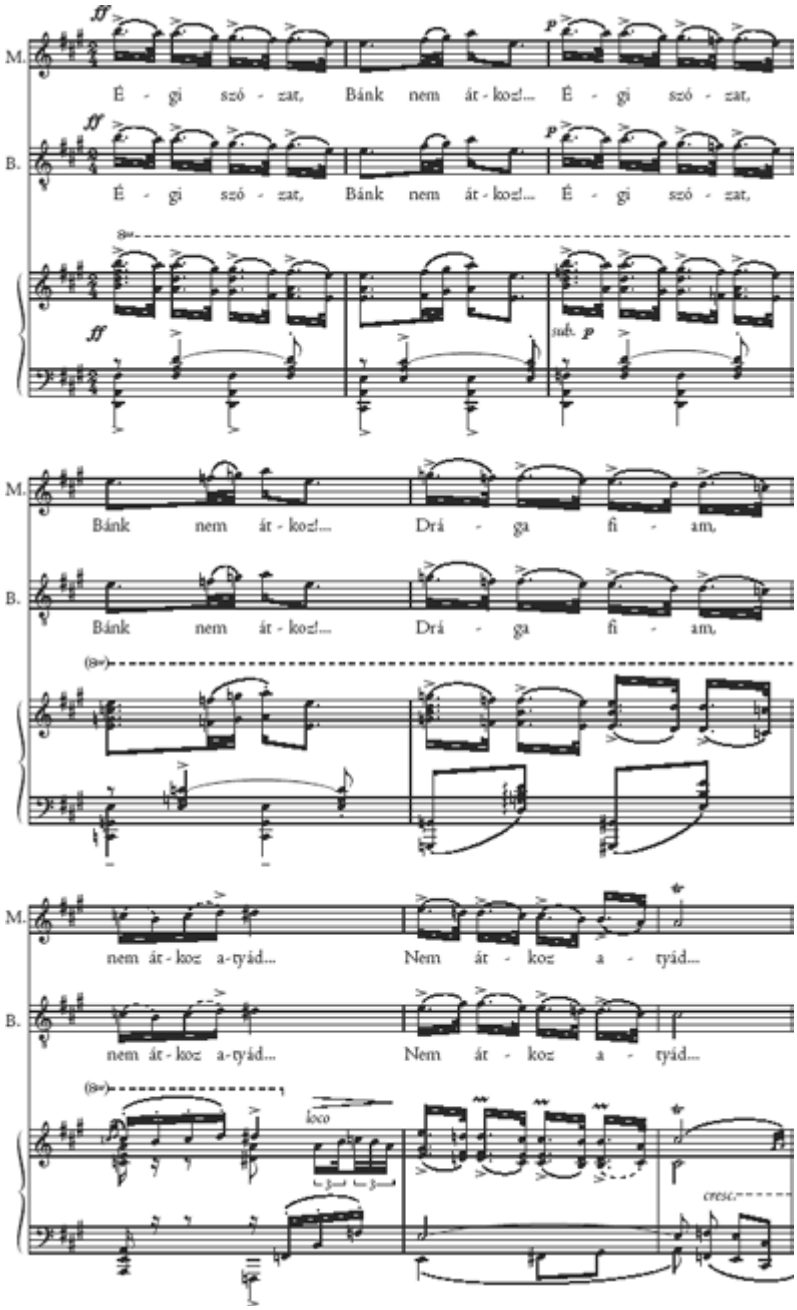
ex. 7-1d *Magyar nóta* and *style hongrois*, Johannes Brahms, Hungarian Dance no. 5 (1869), mm. 33–48 (Primo right hand)

From these examples, many (though not all) of the characteristics of the *style hongrois* can be deduced: dotted rhythms, syncopations, augmented seconds, distinctive cadence patterns, and so forth. Apart from the cadence patterns, perhaps, none of these characteristics were uniquely the property of the *style hongrois*. Like most stylistic "signifiers," it was not a single trait but a pliable cluster. That gave it great flexibility: two

melodies could be equally obvious exemplifications of the Hungarian cluster without necessarily having any specific traits in common.

Of course there was also a native Hungarian "school" of composers who employed the *magyar nóta* style in works cast in the larger vocal and instrumental forms of European art music. One was Mihály Mosonyi (1815–70), who was given the name Michael Brand at birth, but who translated it into its Hungarian equivalent as an act of patriotism. He composed two symphonies, a piano concerto, a large number of chamber and piano works, and three operas, all with the avowed purpose of "creating, alongside the German, Italian, and French currents in music, a fourth world-famous style, the Hungarian,"[1] but he never gained the sort of international reputation that would have realized such an ambition.

By common consent the "national composer" of Hungary during the nineteenth century was Franz (or Ferenc) Erkel (1810–93), an opera specialist, whose "historical dramatic opera" *Bánk bán* (1861) occupied a hallowed place in Hungarian culture analogous to that of Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* in Russia. The patriotic play by József Katona on which it was based, written in 1815, was twice banned by the Austrian censors for the way it used a thirteenth-century revolt against foreign infiltration as an allegory of contemporary Hungarian resistance to the Hapsburgs. Ex. 7-2 shows the climax of a tragic duet between the title character (heroic tenor), and his doomed wife Melinda. The *magyar nóta* idiom here assumes a high dramatic posture, in which the dominating musical figures are descending dotted sequences typical of Gypsy violin music, and "noble" short-long rhythms derived from the distinctive accentual patterns of the Hungarian language.



ex. 7-2 Franz Erkel, *Bánk bán*, Act II, scene 1, duet

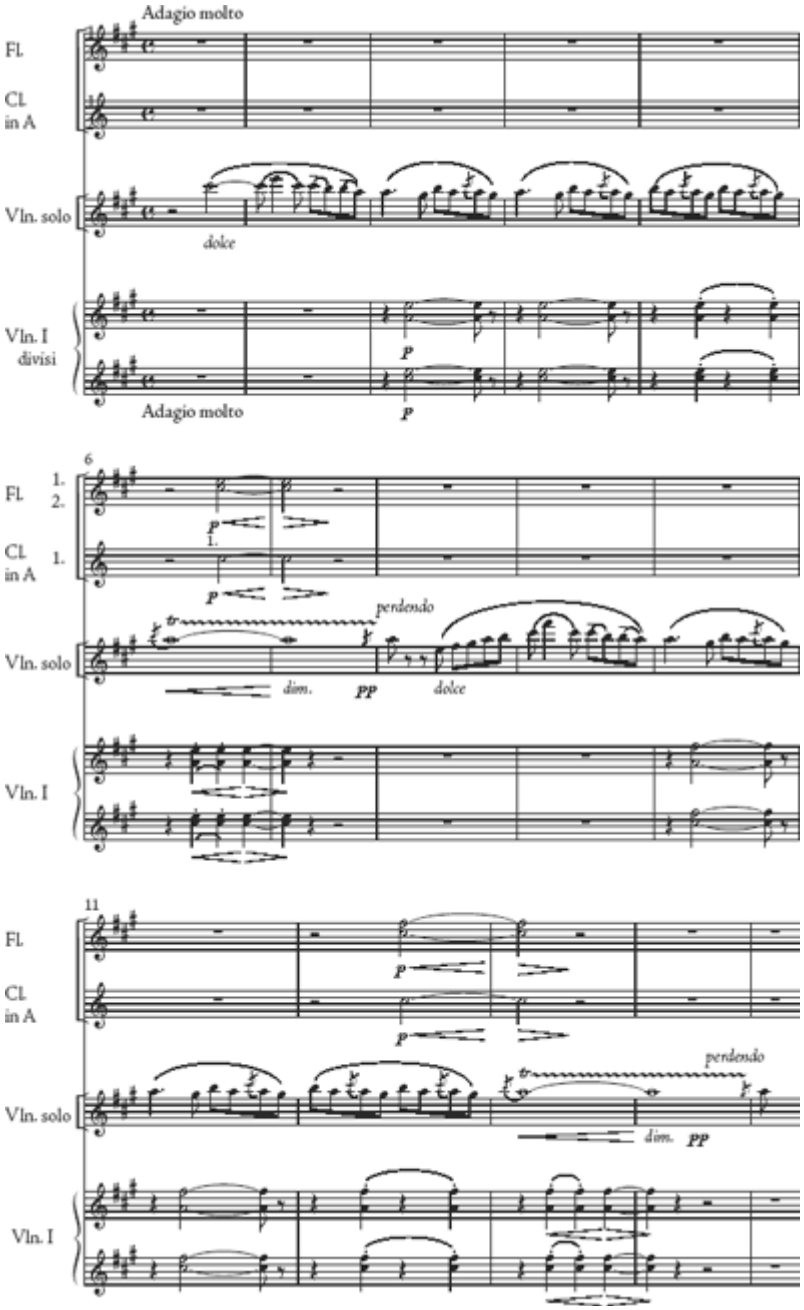
Inevitably, though, the greatest figure associated with the *style hongrois* in the nineteenth century, and its chief ambassador to the world at large, was Franz Liszt. Although he was surely the most cosmopolitan of all musicians, and the adopted standard bearer for the New German School with its universalist agenda, Liszt was nevertheless of Hungarian birth, and eager to take creative (and commercial) advantage of the fact. Most of his compositions in the *style hongrois* were virtuoso vehicles—nineteen Hungarian Rhapsodies, a *Hungarian Fantasia* with orchestra, and the like—in which he translated the Gypsy violin idiom, just as he had the Paganini idiom, into perfect keyboardese (replete with tremolo effects to evoke the accompanying *cimbalom* or Hungarian dulcimer).

Later in life, Liszt occasionally used the idiom more "seriously," as in a set of *Hungarian Historical Portraits* for piano (composed between 1870 and 1885) dedicated to seven Hungarian patriots (including Mosonyi, but not the still-banned Kossuth), or the grandiose *Hungarian Coronation Mass* for soloists, chorus, and orchestra, expressly composed for the separate crowning of Franz Joseph in 1867. The Hungarian coloring in

the Mass is most pronounced precisely at the most solemn moment, the Benedictus, where (following the exalted example of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*) Liszt entrusted a wordless prayer (already heard in the Offertory) to the solo violin (Ex. 7-3).

Previously, Liszt had written (or had his companion, Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein write) a substantial book, *Des bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* (1859, published in English as *The Gipsy in Music*), in which he characterized the *style hongrois* as "a great movement" in art, on an expressive and formal par with all other European musics. This was one of the classic statements for music of Johann Gottfried von Herder's early Romantic ideal—or the old Herderian ambivalence which insisted on assigning equal value both to the specific idiosyncrasies and to the common humanity of all particular cultures. The purpose of writing the book was to explicate an exotic idiom that European audiences might find baffling, and at the same time to celebrate and demonstrate its universal validity. The chief merit of the music, and for a romantic there could be no higher one, was its immediacy and authenticity of expression. "In the very act of passing the bow across the violin-strings," Liszt enthused, "a natural inspiration suggested itself; and, without any search for them, there came rhythms, cadences, modulations, melodies and tonal discourses." The Gypsy violinist "revealed that golden ray of interior light proper to himself, which otherwise the world would never have known or suspected." Hungary's role, in Liszt's view, was nurturing rather than creative; but that was enough to make the Gypsy idiom truly Hungarian.

> The Gypsy art can never be separated from Hungary, whose arms it must forever bear on seal and banner. To Hungary it owes a life passed entirely within its limits and in its atmosphere. To Hungary also the attainment of its virility and maturity are due, dependent as these were upon appreciation of its noble elements. It has also Hungary to thank for supply of its greatest needs—comprehension and sympathy. The haughtiness of its rhythms, their imposing dignity and sudden cries, remindful of those of a startled steed at sound of the trumpet—all from the very first, went straight to the Hungarian heart.[2]



ex. 7-3 Franz Liszt, *Hungarian Coronation Mass*, violin solo from Benedictus

Jonathan Bellman, a historian of the *style hongrois*, has pointed out that by attributing the actual origin of the *magyar nóta* to the Gypsies, rather than just its propagation through performance, Liszt committed an offensive error in Hungarian eyes. As Bellman put it, "Hungary only understood the rhythms, in Liszt's view—it did not produce them."[3] And yet the Hungarian language, in which every word (even foreign ones) are pronounced with a strong accent on the first syllable, seems the obvious source of those "haughty rhythms" Liszt celebrated. Liszt, who was brought up speaking German and who made French, the international tongue of European aristocracy and diplomacy, the vehicle of his mature career, was never fluent in the vernacular of the country of his birth and may not have been equipped to appreciate its relationship to the music he described. But he got the part about haughtiness right; for that is the aristocratic posture par excellence, and as we know, the *magyar nóta* was most actively patronized and promoted by the Hungarian gentry or small-landowner class.

Notes:

(1) Ferenc Bónis, "Mosonyi, Mihály," in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. XVII (2nd ed.; New York: Grove, 2001), p. 184.

(2) Franz Liszt, *Des Bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie* (1859); quoted in Jonathan Bellman, *The* Style Hongrois *in the Music of Western Europe* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), p. 179.

(3) Bellman, *Style Hongrois*, p. 179.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online

Béla Bartók

Style hongrois

Zoltán Kodály

A CHANGE OF COURSE

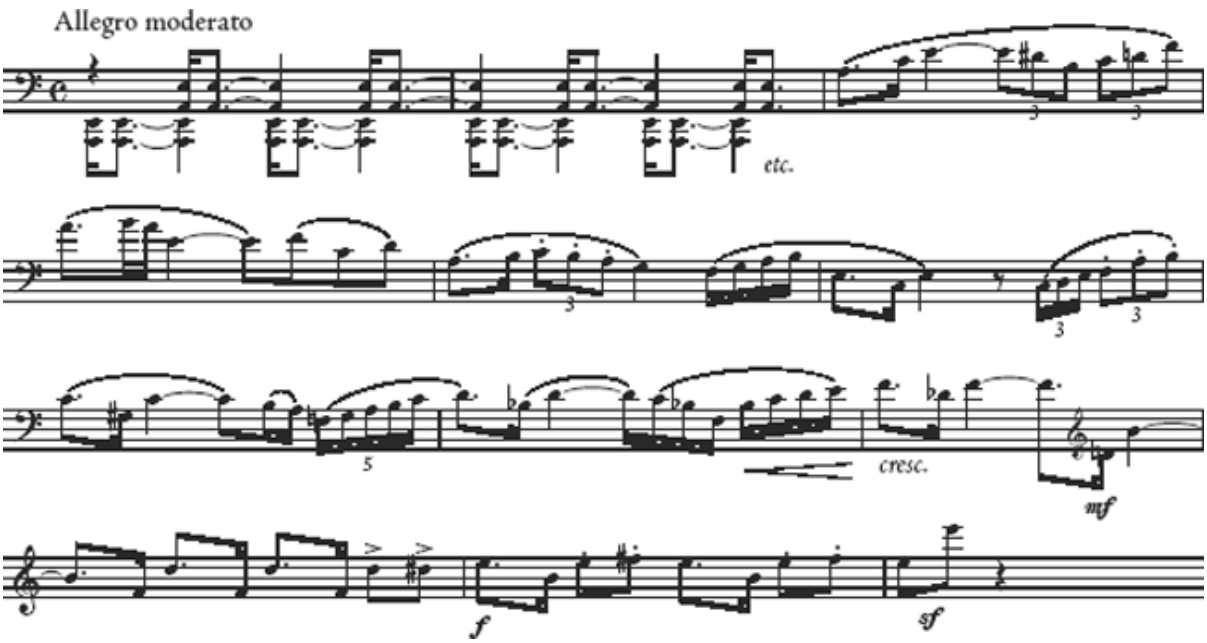
Chapter: CHAPTER 7 Social Validation
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

We do not need to adjudicate this old controversy about the origins of the *magyar nóta*. What is significant to us is the tension its lurking presence contributed to the new, maximalizing phase of Hungarian musical nationalism, the chief protagonist of which, Béla Barték (1881–1945), was the most famous Hungarian-speaking composer Hungary ever produced. Bartók began his career in the self-conscious image of Liszt, as a virtuoso pianist committed both to Hungarian nationalism and to the advancement of all the most "progressive" ideas in the music of his time. Both aspects of Bartók's creative agenda were equally pertinent to his eventual preeminence among Hungarian musicians.

fig. 7-2 Bartók collecting songs from Slovak peasants in 1907.

The work that brought him his first celebrity was a symphonic poem, *Kossuth*, composed in 1903 and first performed the next year. Its self-evident patriotic associations were enhanced, at the time of its premiere, by renewed tensions between Hungarians and Austrians, sparked by Hungarian demands that their language be used equally with German within the "k.u.k." army, and that Hungarians be given equal opportunity to

command. The composition embodies a kind of narrative of the 1848–1849 revolution, in which the Austrians are represented by a grotesque distortion of Haydn's famous imperial anthem ("Gott, erhalte Franz den Kaiser"), and Kossuth (by extension, the Hungarians) by a melody in the noblest *magyar nóta* style (Ex. 7-4).



ex. 7-4 Béla Bartók, *Kossuth*, opening theme

A list of the self-evident Hungarian characteristics of this theme would begin with the "haughty" accompanying rhythms, and go on to include dotted pairs on every downbeat (some of them ornamented by breaking the short note into two thirty-seconds as notated), the use of the raised fourth degree (D♯), the "crowded" upbeats (four sixteenths, quintuplets, eventually sextolets as well), and so on. But as the Hungarian-born Bartók scholar Judit Frigyesi has emphasized, equally important is the fact that Bartók has fashioned an "endless," motivically evolving melody out of these materials, of a kind that is never found in popular music, but only in the most advanced "post-Wagnerian" symphonic compositions like the tone poems of Strauss and the early symphonies of Mahler.[4]

There are indeed many specific resonances in *Kossuth* with Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* ("A hero's life," 1898) and the first movement of Mahler's Second Symphony, which (as we may recall from chapter 1) represented a *Todtenfeier*, a heroic funeral. The appropriateness of these resonances for glorifying a Hungarian national hero is obvious, and so the "progressive" aspect of Bartók's achievement was a full partner in its nationalistic agenda. In the view of Hungarian modernists, their country's coming of age as a musical nation demanded both its possessing the particularity of a national style and its meeting the universal standard of modernity.

The problem was that by the end of the nineteenth century, the *style hongrois*, in Bellman's words, "was ubiquitous as entertainment music," and "through familiarity had lost much of its quality of strangeness."[5] Both its commonness and its associations with café genres could only devalue it in the eyes (and ears) of modernists. As long as musical nationalism implied the use of the *magyar nóta* idiom, or what Bartók described as "popular art music," it could only impede the development of a universally viable Hungarian modernist music. As Frigyesi puts it, there seemed to be a barrier between "national" and "serious" music.[6] The contradiction gave rise to a dilemma.

The solution that Bartók hit upon, together with his fellow composer-nationalist and frequent collaborator Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967), might at first seem paradoxical. They strove for universal viability by seeking a more authentic "Hungarianness." Kodály, who had a rural upbringing, had long been aware that the peasant music of the Hungarian countryside was of an altogether different style and character from the *magyar nóta*,

He began to study it seriously, published his first articles about it in 1904, began making collecting expeditions in 1905, and in 1906 earned a Ph.D. in literature with a dissertation on the stanzaic structure of Hungarian folksong. Meanwhile, partly as a result of a chance encounter with a peasant singer, partly in emulation of Kodály's activities, Bartók also began transcribing peasant songs.

In 1906, the two composers issued an epoch-making anthology, *Magyar népdalok* ("Hungarian folksongs"), consisting of twenty transcriptions with piano accompaniment, the first ten arranged by Bartók, the rest by Kodály. The preface, signed by both but written by Kodály, expressed the hope that, once provided with access to them, the Hungarian public "might get to like" authentic folksongs.[7] "If only these primordial expressions of the spirit of our people would meet with even half the affection they deserve!" the editors exclaimed. But these "primordial expressions" of Hungarianness were something even Bartók had only encountered in adulthood. They were not his "native music." Even for him they were an acquired taste.

fig. 7-3 Bartók and Kodály with the Waldbauer-Kerpely Quartet, March 1910 (photograph by Aladár Székely).

And so the preface ended on a pessimistic note: "The overwhelming majority of Hungarians are not yet Hungarian enough, no longer naive enough and not yet cultured enough to let these songs touch their hearts." And indeed, the anthology sold only 150 copies in twelve years. The epoch that it marked was slow in coming, reforming the editors themselves, and other members of the nation's musical elite, long before it did the general public. Throughout his life Kodály grumbled that in Hungary those who were cultured were not Hungarian and those who were Hungarian were not cultured. What might have been a racist complaint in other contexts was in this case a particularly forthright statement of the dilemma facing Hungarian modernists, who wanted equally to be national on the peasant model and to be sophisticated, which implied urbanity. It was a dilemma that pervaded every aspect of their creative lives, and would haunt their legacies.

As always, reform proved to be a two-way street. Bartók summed up the import of the new folk idiom he and Kodály had discovered, in sharp and somewhat sneering contrast to the older *style hongrois*, in a memoir dating from 1918:

> Its expressive power is amazing, and at the same time it is devoid of all sentimentality and superfluous ornaments. It is simple, sometimes primitive but never frivolous. The more valuable part was in the old ecclesiastical or old Greek modes, or based on more primitive pentatonic scales, and the melodies were full of the freest and most varied rhythmic phrases and changes of tempi, played both *rubato* and *giusto* [in strict time].[8]

But in their zeal, Bartók and Kodóly considerably exaggerated the simplicity of the music in the course of arranging it for publication, so that it would conform to their modernist aesthetic ideals. In 1938, when they could afford a less polemical approach (and when Bartók had the use of a low-speed phonograph that made them easier to transcribe), they reissued the collection with the "superfluous ornaments" they had originally suppressed reinstated (see Ex. 7-5). Also typically exaggerated or mistaken was Bartók's assumption that the unusual diatonic structure of the peasant melodies represented survivals of medieval or even ancient Greek modes. There is no need to assume such historical connections between diatonic scales, simply because they do not conform to those of the major/minor key system.

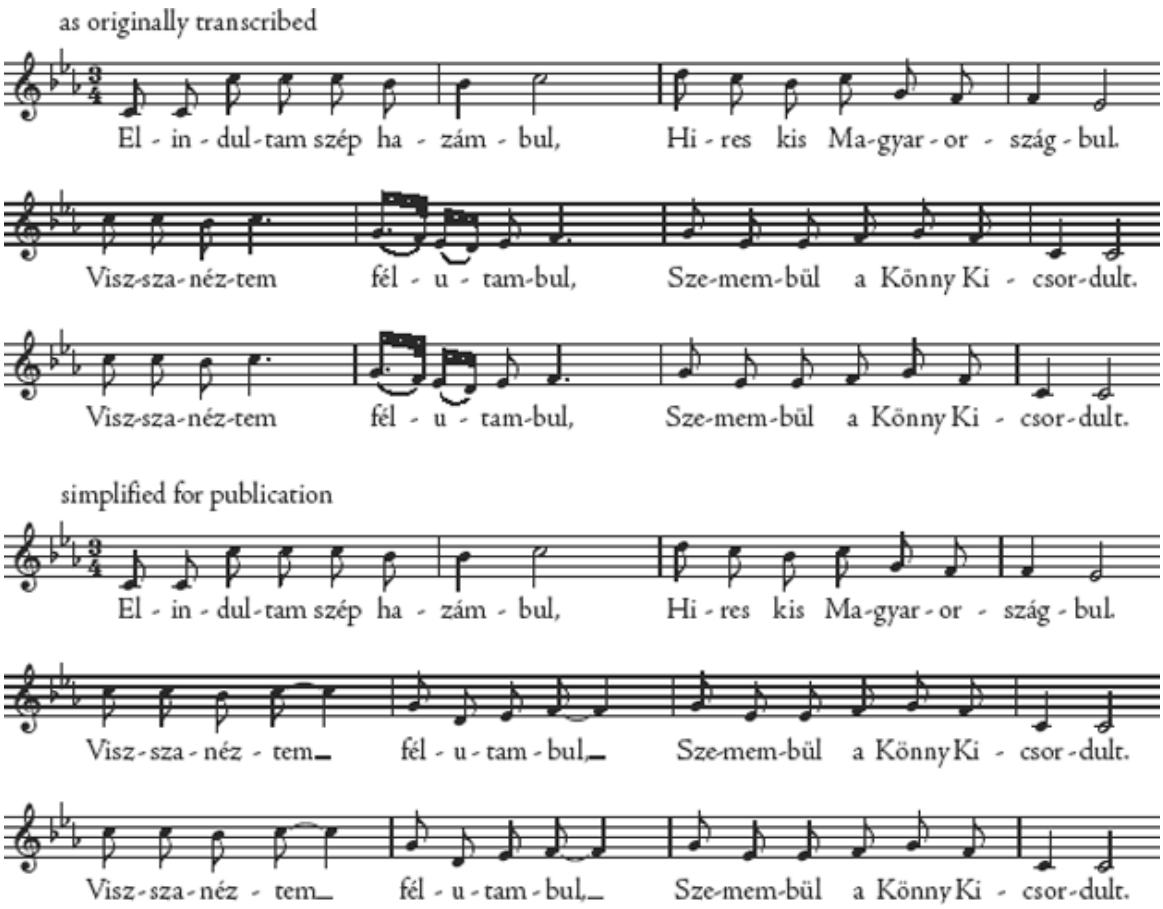
But these inaccuracies and equivocations were born of the composers' wish to justify a change in their own composing style. Creative fervor temporarily gained the upper hand over scholarly scruples. As Bartók put it in a slightly later (1921) version of the same memoir,

> The outcome of these studies was of decisive influence upon my work, because it liberated me from the tyrannical rule of the major and minor keys .... It became clear to me that the old modes, which had been forgotten in our music, had lost nothing of their vigor. Their new employment made new rhythmic combinations possible. This new way of using the diatonic scale brought freedom from the rigid use of the major and minor keys, and eventually led to a new conception of the chromatic scale, every tone of which came to be considered of equal value and could be used freely and independently.[9]

So the primary value of the rediscovery of the old was the possibility it created of achieving the new, yet without any loss in national specificity (which alone could guarantee "authenticity"). The simple peasant music, precisely because it was little known and previously uncultivated by composers of "art music," offered modernists greater scope for creative appropriation than the ornate and highly stylized *magyar nóta*, which had its own tradition in art music, and which therefore carried a heavy baggage of associations, including some (to urban commercial genres, to the reactionary nobility, etc.) that nationalists of Bartók and Kodály's generation had to reject.

Exhilarated by his breakthrough, Bartók eagerly began to theorize about the proper relationship between "peasant music" and "modern music," eventually arriving at a three-tiered prescription that he published in a Budapest music magazine in 1931. Excerpted and laid out in tabular form, Bartók's schema looks like this:

- 1. We may, for instance, take over a peasant melody unchanged or only slightly varied, write an accompaniment to it and possibly some opening and concluding phrases. This kind of work would show a certain analogy with Bach's treatment of chorales. Two main types can be distinguished among works of this character:
    - a. In one case accompaniment, introductory and concluding phrases are of secondary importance, and they only serve as an ornamental setting for the precious stone: the peasant melody.



ex. 7-5 Two versions of no. 1 from Bartók/Kodály, *Magyar népdalok*

- b. It is the other way round in the second case: the melody only serves as a "motto" while that which is built around it is of real importance. In any case it is of the greatest importance that the musical qualities of the setting should be derived from the musical qualities of the melody.

- 2. Another method by which peasant music becomes transmuted into modern music is the following: the composer does not make use of a real peasant melody but invents his own imitation of such melodies. There is no real difference between this method and the one described first.

- 3. There is yet a third way in which the influence of peasant music can be traced in a composer's work. Neither peasant melodies nor imitations of peasant melodies can be found in his music, but it is pervaded by the atmosphere of peasant music. In this case we may say, he has completely absorbed the idiom of peasant music which has become his musical mother tongue. He masters it as completely as a poet masters his mother tongue.[10]

The last, and obviously most important (because most creative) manner of assimilation is—perhaps deliberately—the most vaguely expressed, since the greatest vagueness imposes the fewest limits. It seems clear, though, that what Bartók is describing is related to what, with reference to Stravinsky in chapter 3, was termed "neonationalism," the adoption from folklore not of thematic material but of style characteristics, abstractly conceived. Bartók's reference to the "mother tongue" is significant, precisely since he recognizes that urban composers like himself do not learn the idiom of peasant music from their mothers but must master it through deliberate application, as an adult learns a foreign language. So the "Hungary" that this music, composed according to Bartók's precepts, represents is no real Hungary but an idealized Hungary constructed by combining rural (or "primitive") raw material with the most sophisticated, urbane techniques

of elaboration and development: the Hungary of the liberal utopian imagination.

And just because it was liberal, and because it was utopian, Bartók's musical nationalism, unlike any we have seen before, was pluralistic and all-embracing in a manner recalling the eighteenth-century philosophy of Herder, the original romantic nationalist. Bartók studied, and in his creative work assimilated, the folk music not only of the Magyars, but of all the peoples who inhabited "greater Hungary"—Romanians, Slovaks, Bulgars, Croats, and Serbs—and even ethnically remoter peoples like the Turks (distantly related linguistically to the Magyars) or the Arabs of North Africa (coreligionists to the Turks), both of whose musics Bartók researched on location, and about which he published treatises. He was reviled for the catholicity of his musical range by narrower nationalists; and eventually Bartók felt impelled to leave a Hungary that had allied itself politically with the German Nazis, the most virulently narrow nationalists of all. He may be justly viewed as the last of the Herderians, in contrast to the—sadly—more typical twentieth-century nationalists who had betrayed Herder's pluralistic legacy.

Notes:

(4) Judit Frigyesi, "Béla Bartók and Hungarian Nationalism: The Development of Bartók's Social and Political Ideas at the Turn of the Century (1899–1903)" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1989), p. 117.

(5) Bellman, *Style Hongrois*, p. 215.

(6) Frigyesi, *Béla Bartók and Hungarian Nationalism*, p. 138ff.

(7) Bartók and Kodály, *Magyar Népdalok* (Budapest: Rozsnyai Károly, 1906), Introduction; trans. Klára Móricz.

(8) Bartók, "The Influence of Peasant Music on Modern Music," in *Béla Bartók's Essays*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), p. 341.

(9) Bartók, "Autobiography"; *Béla Bartók's Essays*, p. 410.

(10) "The Influence of Peasant Music on Modern Music"; *Béla Bartók's Essays*, pp. 341–44.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online

Béla Bartók

Musical Borrowing

Béla Bartók

Nationalism

A PRECARIOUS SYMBIOSIS

Chapter: CHAPTER 7 Social Validation
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Bartók almost immediately began incorporating the melodies of peasant songs into his original compositions, alongside modernist explorations of a kind familiar to us from the work of other composers. The two lines of development were kept in a kind of symbiosis thanks to what could be called Bartók's neonationalist credo, his insistence "that the musical qualities of the setting"—that is, the original composition—"should be derived from the musical qualities of the melody." His unique synthesis was the result of an unerring eye for musical qualities latent in the folk material that could be brought into conformity with the modernistic concepts that attracted him.

He was, in short, as committed a modernist and a maximalist as any of the composers whose work we have been tracing in the last few chapters, but he felt a need unfelt by the others to justify his stylistic predilections to his social conscience. Grounding in folklore provided a social validation for his art, just as it did for German artists a hundred years before, who remade their art in the spirit of Herder's romanticism. Bartók and the rather less maximalistically inclined Kodály were the only European modernists who remained faithful to this strain of romanticism at a time when it was the complementary strain—the egoistical strain that justified its ways solely on grounds of fidelity to one's own unique subjective self—that captured the imaginations of the Germans.

Bartók never openly opposed his social conscience to Schoenberg's arbitrary "instinct," but there are passages in his writings that allude to social matters under cover of "nature." In the romantic view an "authorless" folksong was the product of impersonal nature rather than human subjectivity: hence the implicit superiority of the new Hungarian music. In an article of 1928, written at the request of E. Robert Schmitz and his Pro Musica Society in New York (already encountered in chapter 5, under the name "Franco-American Musical Society," as the sponsors of Charles Ives's quarter-tone music), Bartók undertook to answer the questions, first, "whether contemporary music of Hungary and the contemporary music of other countries have any points in common," and second, "whether contemporary Hungarian music differs from that of other countries."[11] After tracing in some detail the process, which we will trace below, whereby novel harmonies and tonalities could be milked from the "musical qualities of the melody," Bartók summed up by conceding that "many other (foreign) composers, who do not lean upon folk music, have met with similar results at about the same time—only in an intuitive or speculative way, which, evidently, is a procedure equally justifiable." But, having already injected a slightly ironic tone with the word "evidently," Bartók played his trump card. "The difference," he added immediately, "is that we created through Nature."

And several paragraphs later, Bartók allowed himself to spell out the implicit negative critique just a bit:

> One point, in particular, I must again stress: our peasant music, naturally, is invariably tonal, if not always in the sense that the inflexible major and minor system is tonal. (An 'atonal' folk music, in my opinion, is unthinkable.) Since we depend upon a tonal basis of this kind in our creative work, it is quite self-evident that our works are quite pronouncedly tonal in type.[12]

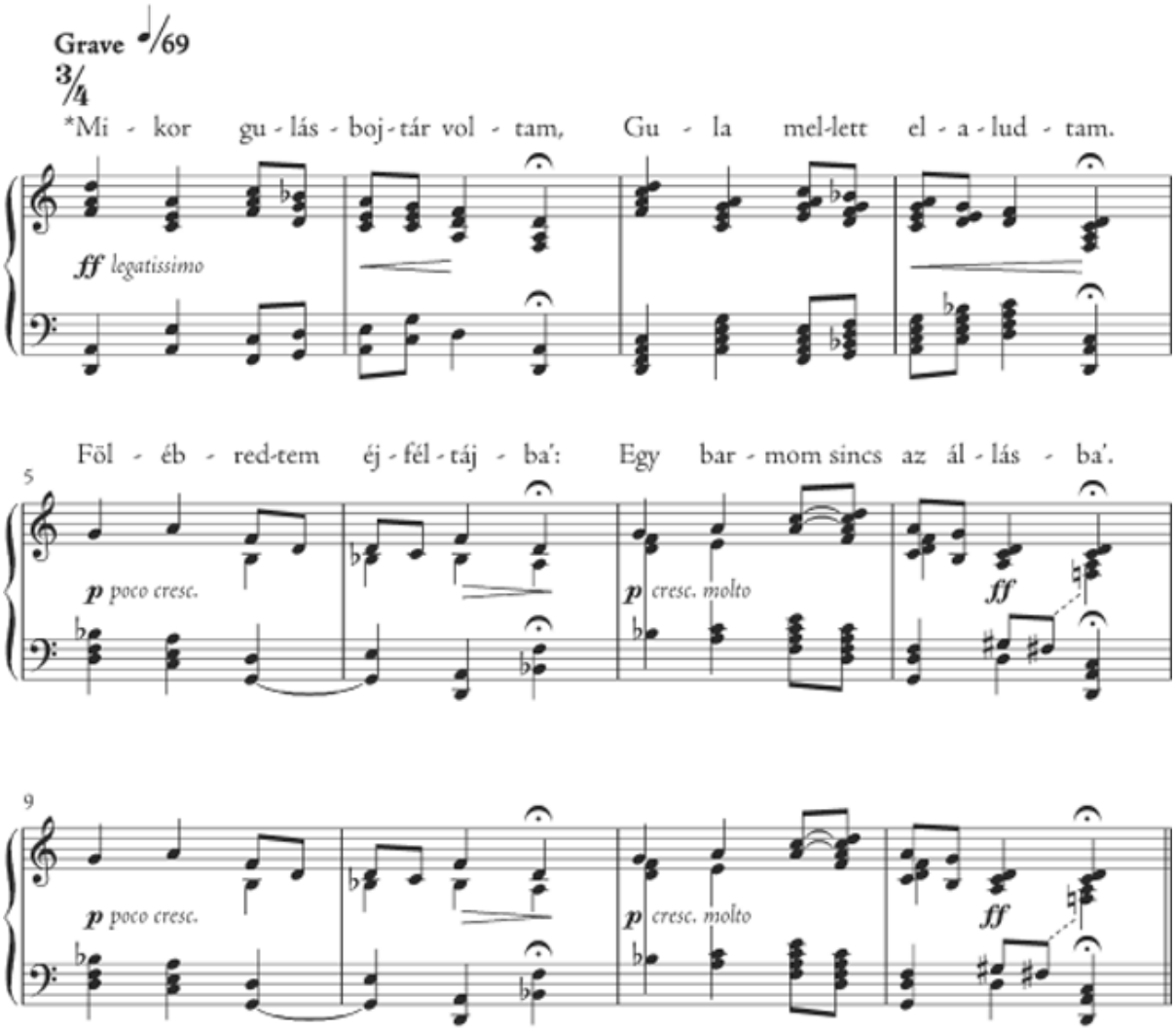
So there it was at last, a social prescription: unless modern art music, however maximalistic, rested on a "natural" basis, by which Bartók meant something that would now be more likely called a social basis, its style would be "unthinkable." Composers and their audiences had to speak a common language, and that language had to be determined by "nature"—that is, a social consensus that subsumed the individual. The same assumptions encompassed and motivated aspects of Bartók's professional activity that set it sharply at odds, both esthetically and ethically, with the work of his Viennese contemporaries. He wrote, for example, a wealth of pedagogical piano music designed to train musicians from childhood in the idiom of contemporary music; and here he was especially careful to keep the nexus between peasant music and modern music clear. Kodály's pedagogical work was even more extensive than Bartók's; many regard it as his most important achievement.

The idea of Schoenberg, Berg, or Webern writing music for training children, or incorporating folklore into their work except as an ironic invocation of "innocence," is as unthinkable as was the idea of an "atonal folk music." Bartók and Kodály, in keeping with the traditions of the Hungarian urban intelligentsia from which they had emerged, maintained, alongside their modernist nationalism, a sense of social mission that was regarded elsewhere as inimical to stylistic progress. Most twentieth-century artists were impelled (or compelled) to choose between these goals. Even Kodály did, eventually. Only Bartók, among the century's universally recognized maximalists, attempted to fuse them. That makes him, for historians, a uniquely interesting "phenomenon."

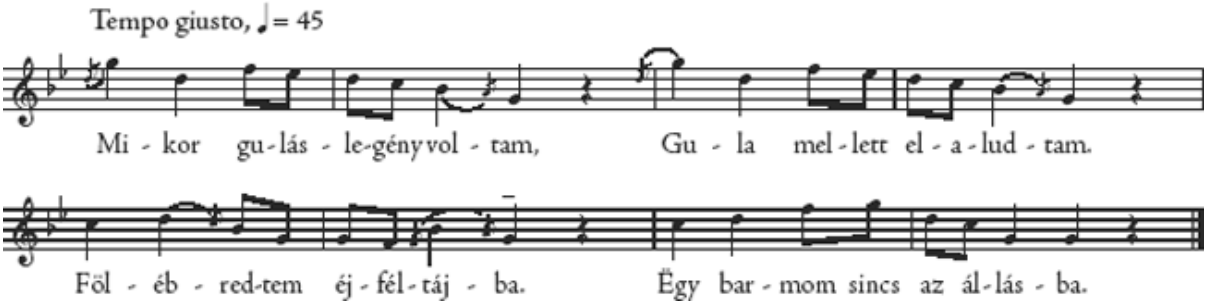
The crucible in which Bartók tried in most concentrated fashion to work out his maximalized peasant-song idiom was a set of fourteen innocently titled Bagatelles for piano (op. 6), composed in May 1908. The set contains everything from straightforward harmonized folk song to modernistic experiment; but within its confines (and with a sidelong glance or two at other works) it is possible to show the relationship between the one extreme and the other with special clarity. Simplest by far, apparently, is Bagatelle no. 4(Ex. 7-6a), nothing more or less than a song Bartók himself had recorded on a phonographic cylinder from the singing of a peasant the year before (Ex. 7-6b), harmonized in a sort of "impressionist" style. The words show it to be a sort of cowboy's lament:

- I was a cowherd,
- I slept by my cows;
- I awoke one night,
- Not one beast was in its stall.

To designate this setting as "impressionist" in style is to call attention to the prevalence of seventh chords in the harmonization, often moving in parallel à la Debussy. Bartók may well have thought of his setting that way, since 1907, the year in which he collected the song on which he based his bagatelle, was also the year in which he discovered the piano music of Debussy—a discovery that Bartók compared, in terms of its impact on his development, to his discovery of peasant song itself.



ex. 7-6a Béla Bartók, Bagatelle, Op. 6, no. 4



ex. 7-6b Song model for Béla Bartók, Bagatelle, Op. 6, no. 4

Just as salient to the analytical eye is the resolute diatonic purity of the setting (apart from the deliberately jarring chromaticism at the ends of the third and fourth phrases). There are no leading tones in evidence, as there were even in Bartók's 1906 folk-song harmonizations. That means that there can be no real dominant chord, since the dominant of D minor, by definition, is an A-major triad. Instead, we have a harmonization

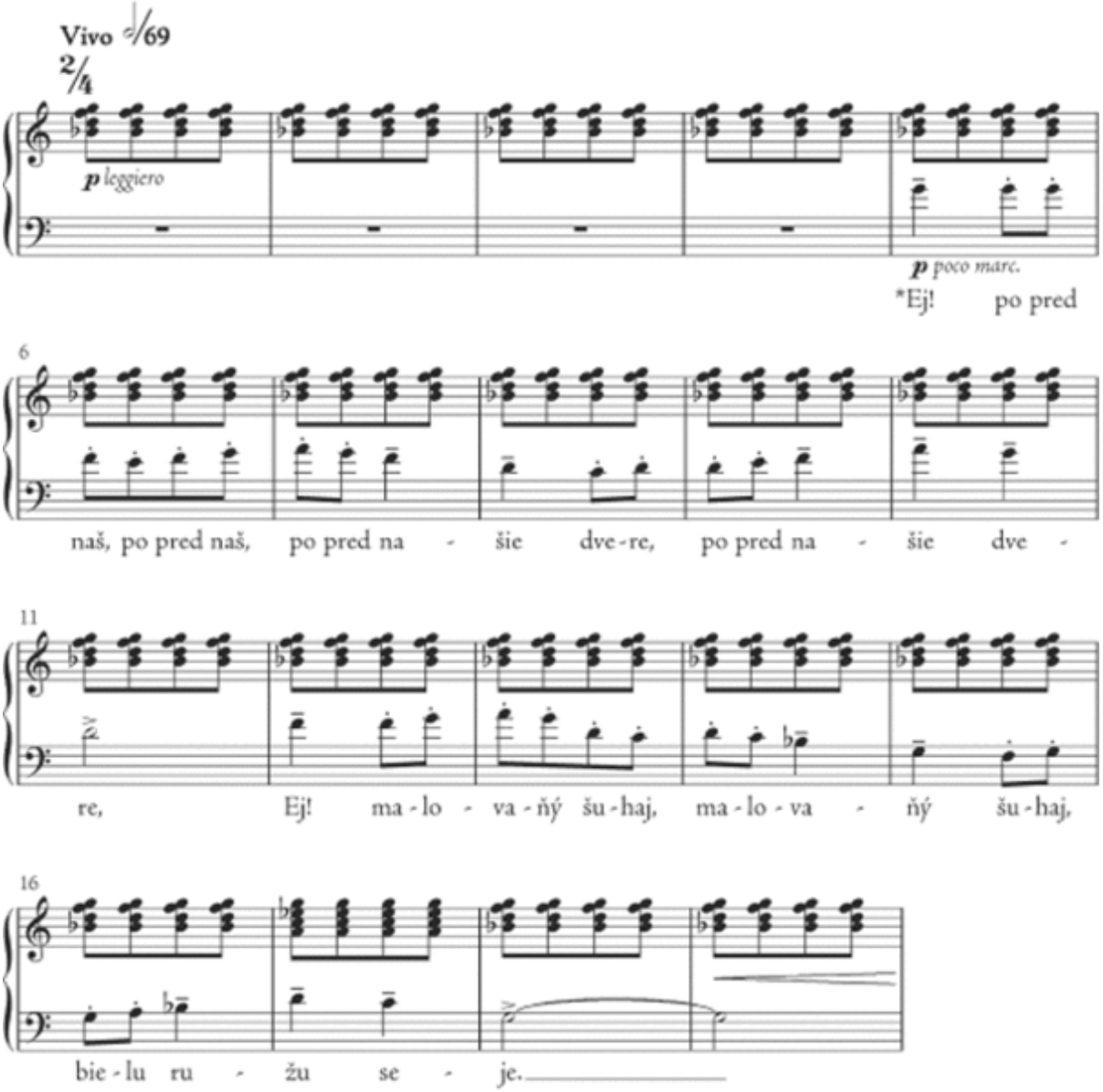
not in the conventional minor but in an unaltered “Aeolian mode” or natural minor. In that mode all the primary chords are minor (i, iv, v) and the secondary chords are major (III, VI, VII) or diminished (ii°).

This means that in the second phrase, for example, which is a reharmonization of the first with added sevenths, all the primary harmonies are “minor-minor” seventh chords (/0 3 7 10/). What is, at least in retrospect, the most characteristically Bartókian aspect of that harmony is the fact that its constituent intervals, counting from the top or bottom, are a palindrome—m3, M3, m3—which means that to count from the top is the same as counting from the bottom. The chord is inversionally symmetrical. And Bartók enhances the inversional symmetry of his harmonization even further when he can—in m. 4, for example, where he adds a ninth to the VII chord (on C) so that its intervals, too, become palindromic: M3, m3, m3, M3.

Between the minor-minor seventh chord and the dominant ninth we may observe in passing an important distinction between two types of symmetry: those with an odd number of elements in which there is a single axis (like the M3 in the minor-minor seventh) as opposed to those with an even number of elements in which there is a double axis (like the m3/m3 pair in the dominant ninth). We will return to this point later, for it will assume enormous importance for Bartók as he maximalizes the style we are in the process of discovering. Another little point that will become bigger concerns the one chromatic touch in Bagatelle no. 4: the G♯ and F♯ that decorate the cadences in mm. 8 and 12. Together they are a kind of double chromatic neighbor encircling the fourth degree of the scale, so that instead of proceeding from the fifth degree to the third through two whole steps (T–T) we proceed by an alternation of semitones and whole tones (S–T–S). That, too, is a symmetrical arrangement of intervals, indeed a “symmetricalized” one.

Like its predecessor, Bagatelle no. 5 (Ex. 7-7a) is based on a folk song that Bartók collected himself, this time one of Slovak origin (that is, from the northernmost province of what was then “Greater Hungary”). Ex. 7-7b shows the original tune as Bartók transcribed it, in a collection that remained unpublished until 1970. (The words are sadder than Bartók’s quick setting might immediately suggest: “Hey, before our door the jilted lad plants a wild rose.”) Once again the harmonization insists (even more emphatically than in the previous bagatelle) on the intervallically symmetrical minor-minor seventh chord as primary consonance.

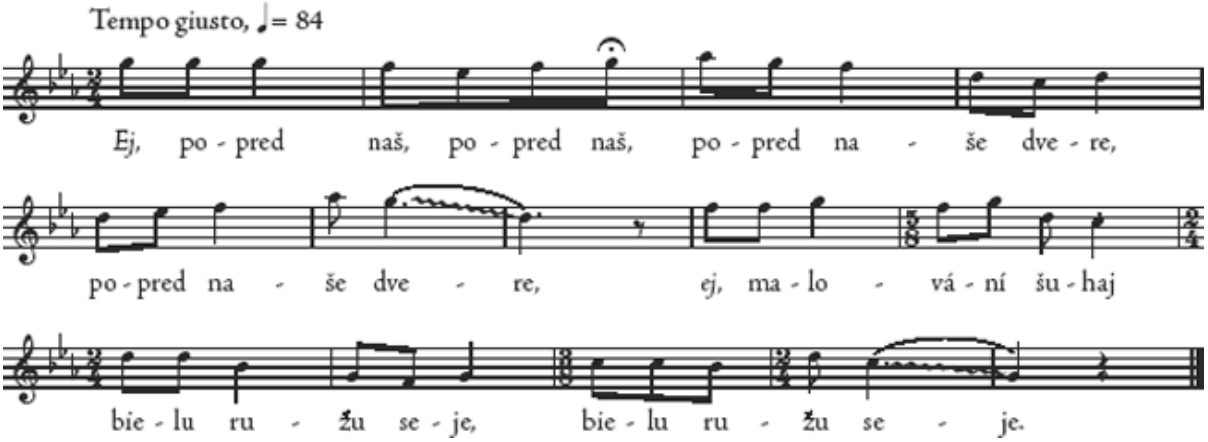
But this time the melody, too, is cast in a mode (the “Dorian”) that is intervallically symmetrical. It is the only diatonic mode that retains all its intervals when inverted. (See Ex. 7-8a; the other diatonic modes are related by inversion as follows: major inverts to Phrygian, minor to Mixolydian, Lydian to “Locrian.”) And as Bartók apparently discovered (or at least demonstrated in his music) earlier than Stravinsky, the Dorian mode, conceived as a pair of symmetrical T–S–T tetrachords placed a whole step apart, can interact easily with the octatonic scale, conceived as a pair of similar tetrachords placed a half step apart (see Ex. 7-8b; either tetrachord can be held in common while the other is transposed).



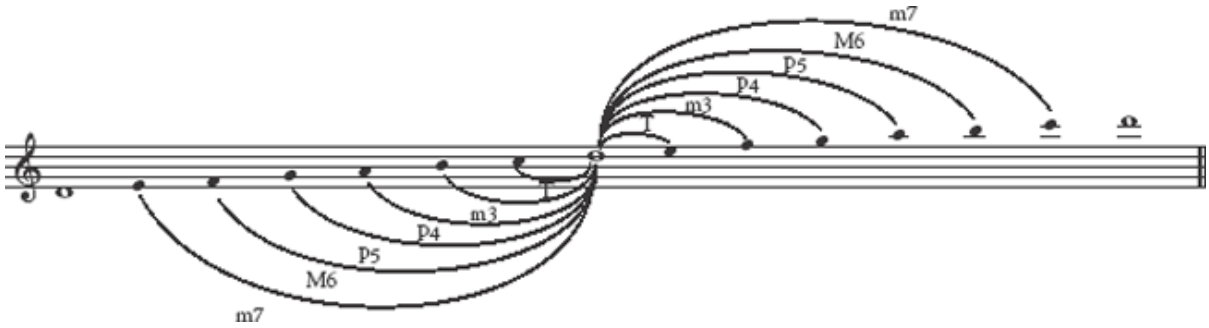
*Tót népdal Gömör megyéből.

*Slovakian Folksong from the province of Gömör: "Hey, at our doorstep the smart boy is planting a white rose."

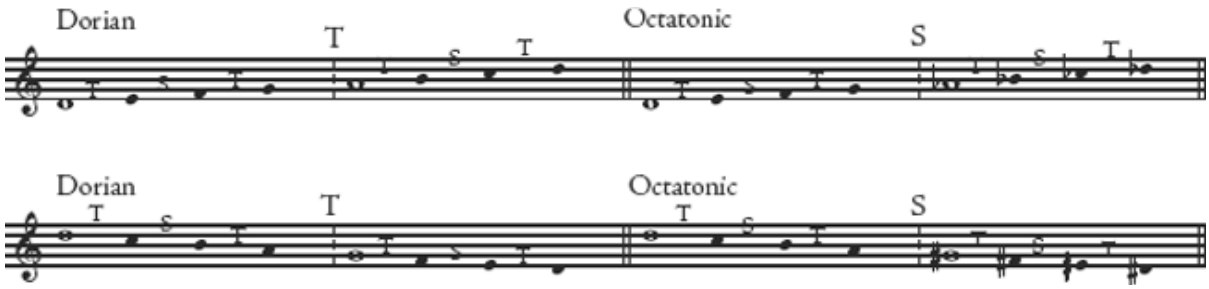
ex. 7-7a Béla Bartók, Bagatelle, Op. 6, no. 5, mm. 1–19



ex. 7-7b Song model for Béla Bartók, Bagatelle, Op. 6, no. 5



ex. 7-8a Dorian inversional symmetry

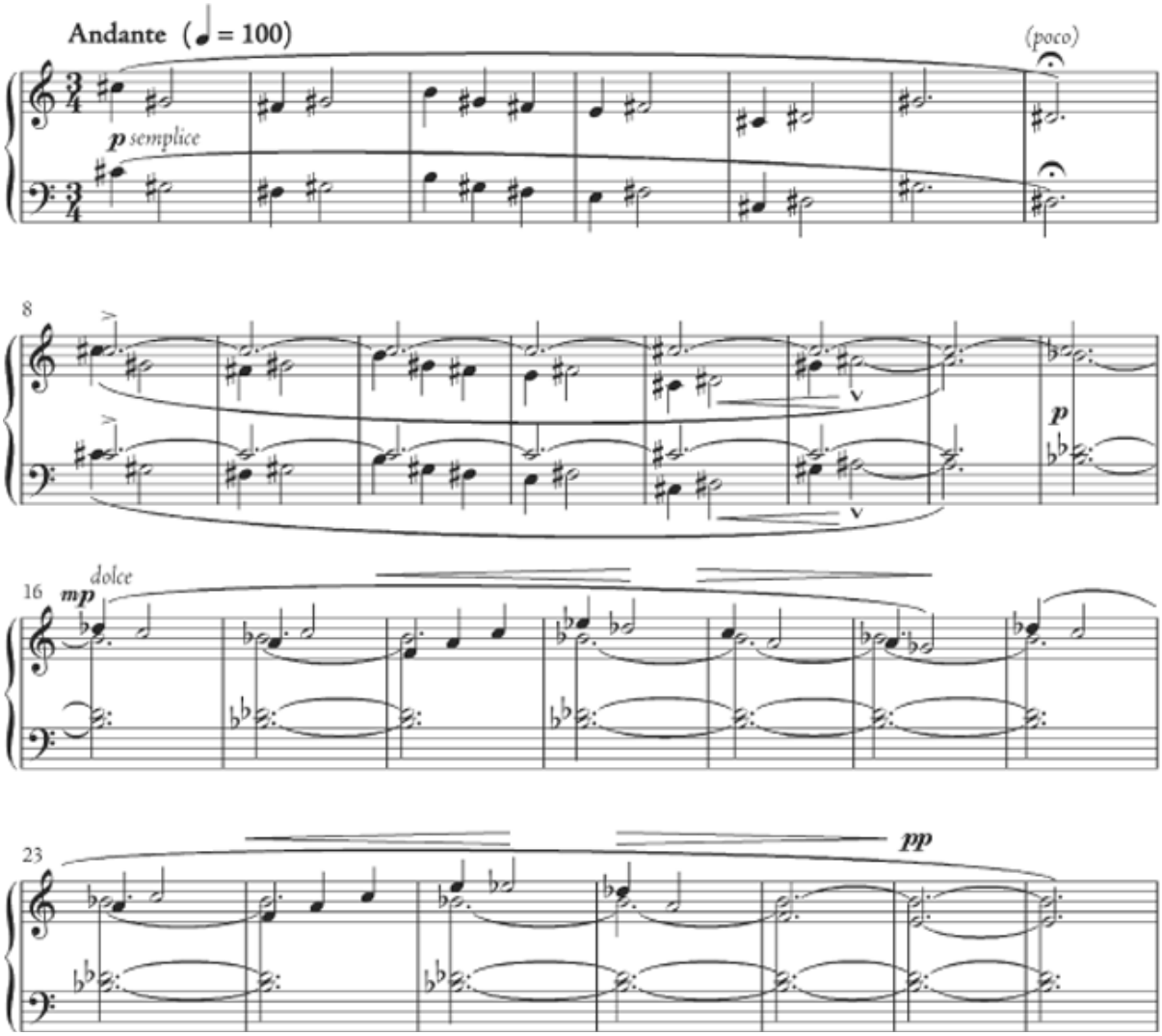


ex. 7-8b Dorian/octatonic interaction

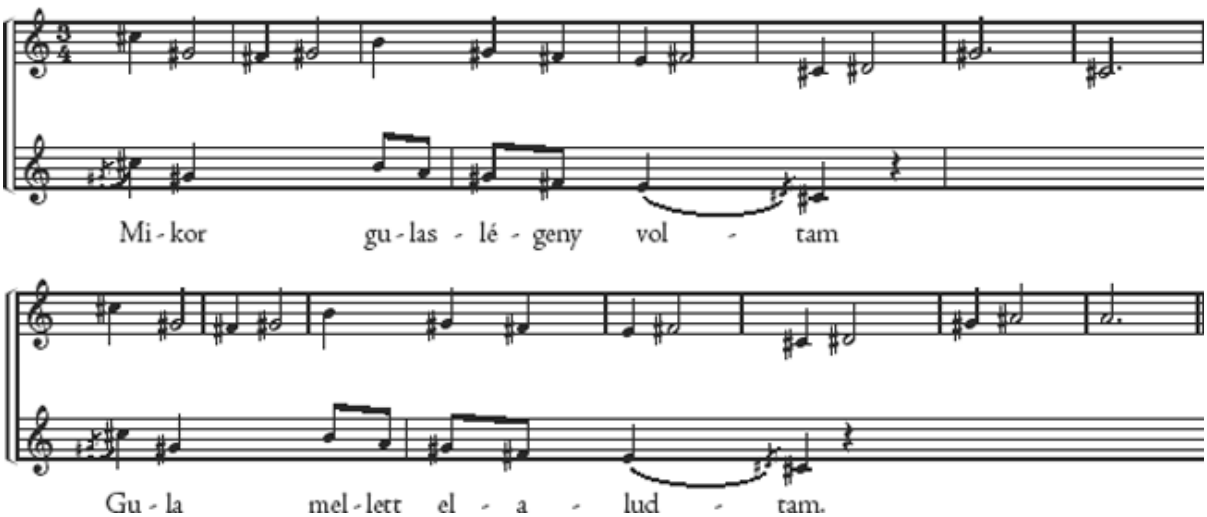
Bagatelles 4and 5 both conform to the method labeled "1a" in the extract given above from Bartók's essay on the relationship between peasant music and modern music. The original tune in both cases occupies the foreground, the composer's additions, however imaginative and suggestive, being merely the "ornamental setting for the precious stone." Before proceeding with the Bagatelles into more abstractly stylized territory, we can savor the difference between the ornamental style labeled "1a" and its counterpart, "1b" (in which "the melody only serves as a 'motto' while that which is built around it is of real importance"), by comparing Bagatelle no. 4 (Ex. 7-6a) with a piece written a year later, the second in a set of *Four Dirges* for piano, which Bartók published (as op. 9A) in 1912 (Ex. 7-9a).

It is not immediately evident that the dirge is based on the same folk melody as the bagatelle, but Ex. 7-9b, which reconstructs their relationship, will make it clear. The dirge melody is constructed by omitting all tones from the folk tune that do not conform strictly to a pentatonic scale, and making up for their absence with neighbors and internal repetitions. In addition, even rhythms have been made uneven to enhance the prevalence of "noble" Hungarian short-long patterns. The tune, in short, has been rendered folkier than the folk; or rather, it has been recast to conform to a set of theoretical abstractions, the first step in "utopianizing" folklore and rendering it fit for modernist use.

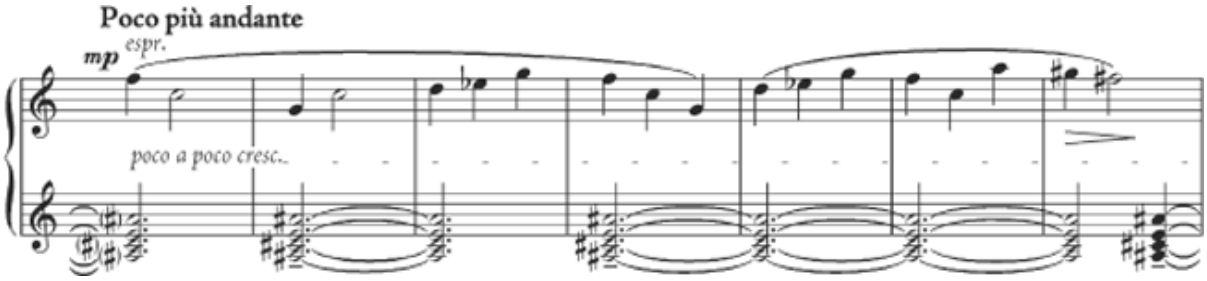
Thereafter the tune is developed in various ways: through enharmonic modulations, by altering its intervals, and (most interestingly) by allowing its predominant structural interval to multiply. That interval is the perfect fourth, which begins the melody and also (in the dirge) brings its first and last phrases to an end. Beginning in m. 31 a variant of the melody is played (Ex. 7-9c) that begins as if splicing the beginning and ending fourths together (mm. 31–32) and repeating the same little symmetrical stack of fourths a couple of measures later (m. 34).



ex. 7-9a Béla Bartók, *Four Dirges*, Op. 9a (1912), no. 2, mm. 1–29

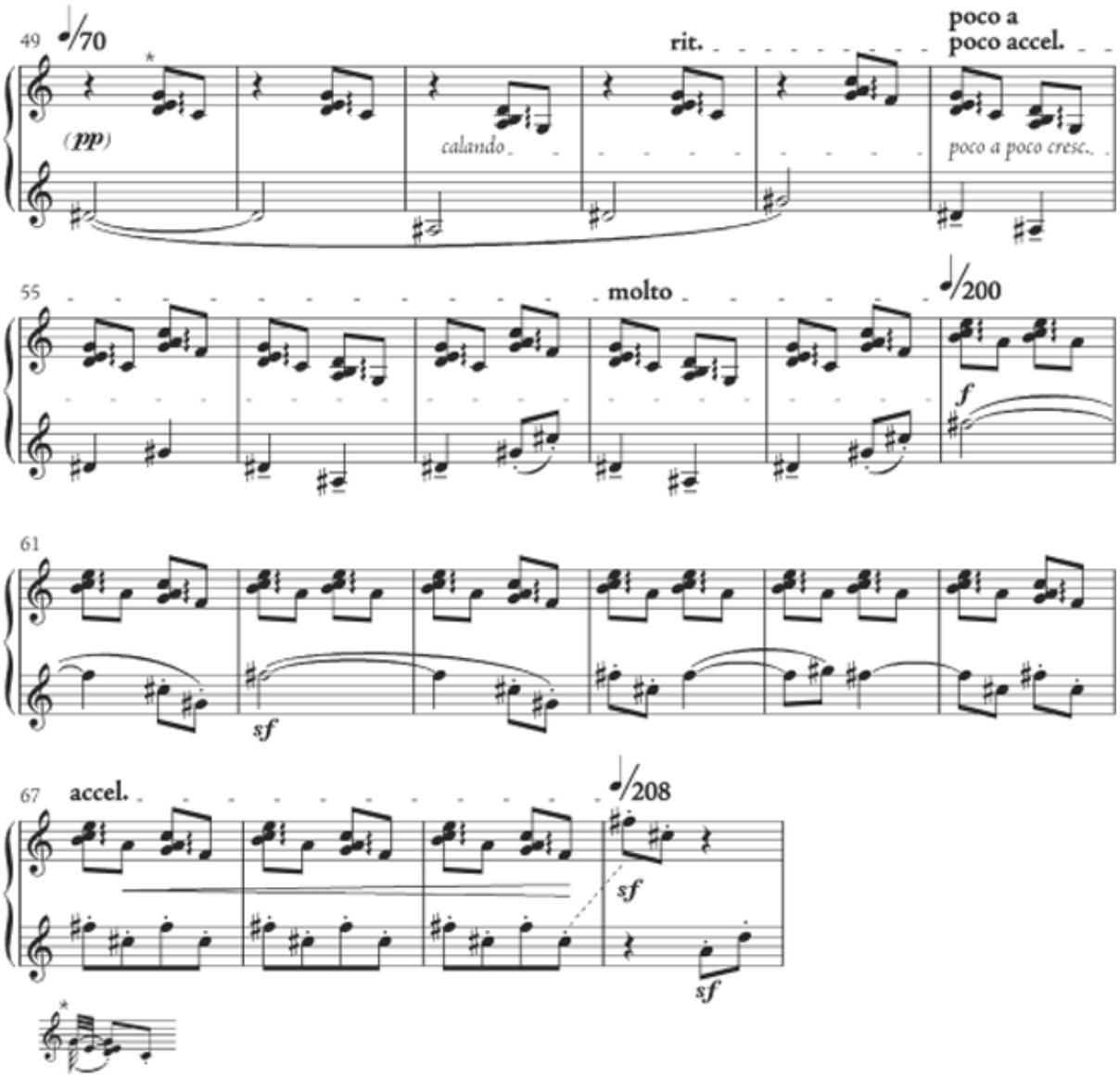


ex. 7-9b Béla Bartók, *Four Dirges*, Op. 9a (1912), no. 2, mm. 1–14, compared with folk tune in Ex. 7-6b



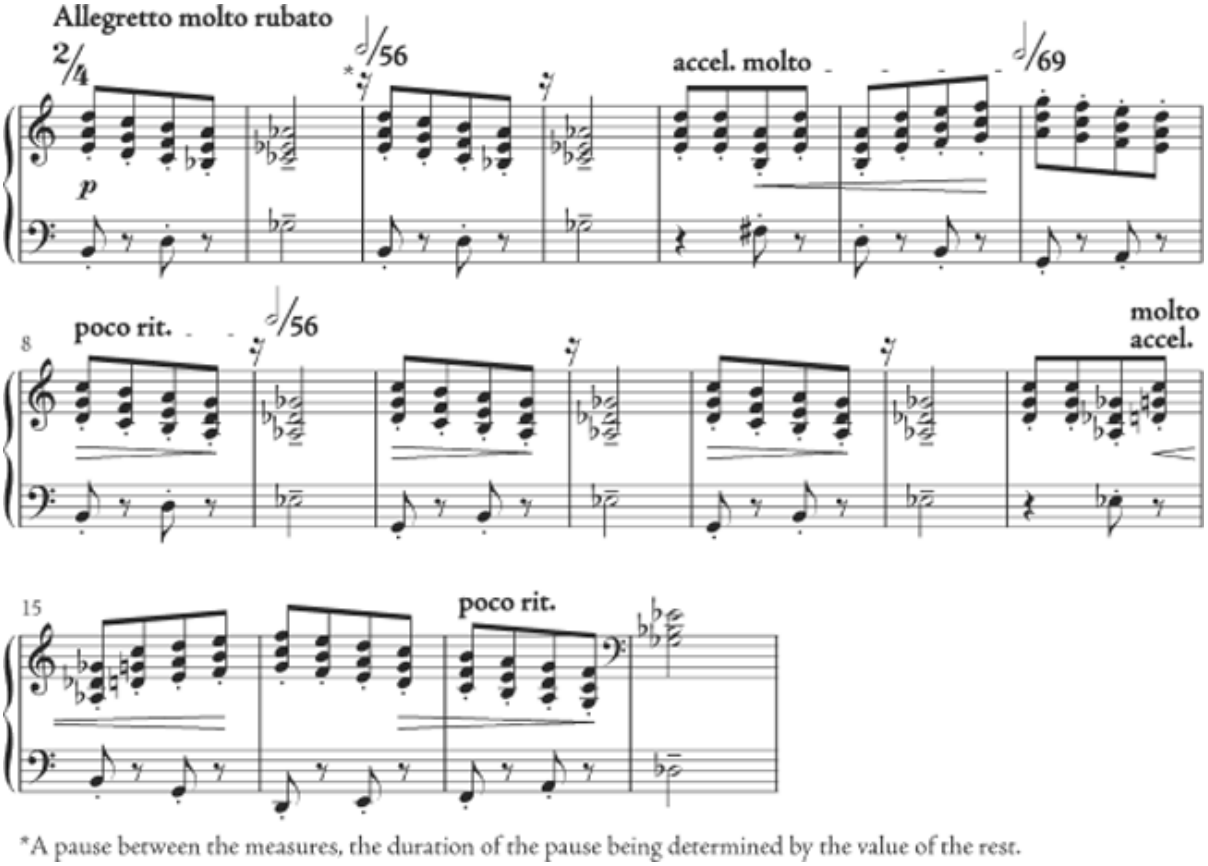
ex. 7-9c Béla Bartók, *Four Dirges*, Op. 9a (1912), no. 2, mm. 31–37

This is one simple instance of one of Bartók's most pervasive neonationalist techniques: mining his tunes for harmonic symmetries and exploiting them in both the horizontal and the vertical dimension. The technique led him to many of the same harmonies we have seen in the "atonal" (or pantonal) works of Schoenberg and his pupils, but in the case of Bartók it is often possible to trace the novel harmonies back to a specific folk-melodic source, showing the process to have been less speculative than empirical. In the middle of Bagatelle no. 7 (Ex. 7-10), there is a long melodic passage consisting of the same superimposed perfect fourths we have just observed in Dirge no. 2, a harmony about which Schoenberg speculated in a famous passage from his *Harmonielehre*, and used with striking effect in his *Chamber Symphony*, op. 9 (1906). But Bartók's stacks of fourths encompass exactly five notes, which if compressed into "best normal order" (as defined in chapter 6) would coincide exactly with the pentatonic ("black key") scale, the scale to which (according to Bartók) all the oldest Hungarian peasant songs conformed.



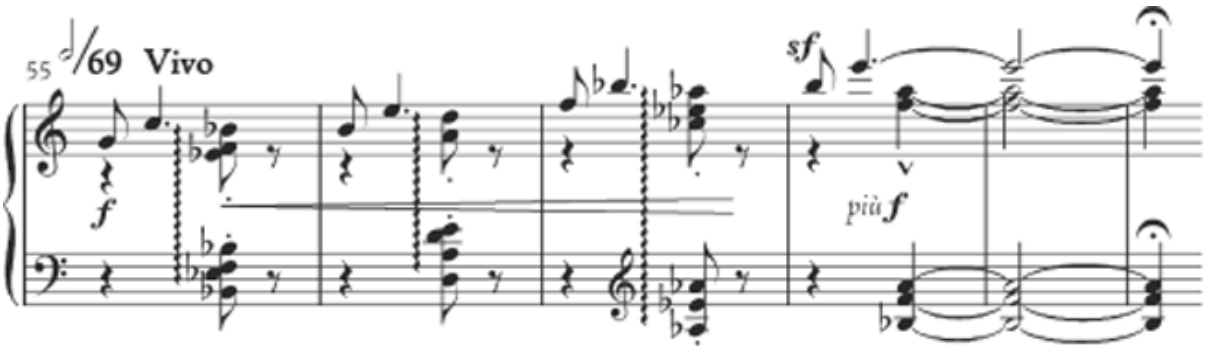
ex. 7-10 Béla Bartók, Bagatelle, Op. 6, no. 7, mm. 49–70

The fourth-melodies, especially when accompanied as they are in Dirge no. 2 and Bagatelle no. 7 by dissonant harmonies (often involving a "white key/black key" opposition), are among Bartók's most elemental modernistic abstractions from folklore. The next stage of abstraction for Bartók, as it was also for Schoenberg, was the "verticalization" of melodic formations, precisely as happens in Bagatelle no. 11 (Ex. 7-11a), where the fourths now occur not as successions but as vertical piles. The immediate juxtaposition of fourth chords at the tritone, as happens in mm. 14–15, introduces another sort of symmetry to the mix, one that will recall the alternations of perfect fourths and tritones that we have already observed in the work of Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Ives. With Bartók the essential harmonic unit is not the three-note "atonal triad" or "*Rite*-chord" as it was with Schoenberg or Stravinsky. Rather, it takes the form of a four-note unit consisting of two fourths at the tritone, as happens melodically at the very climax of Bagatelle no. 11 (Ex. 7-11b).

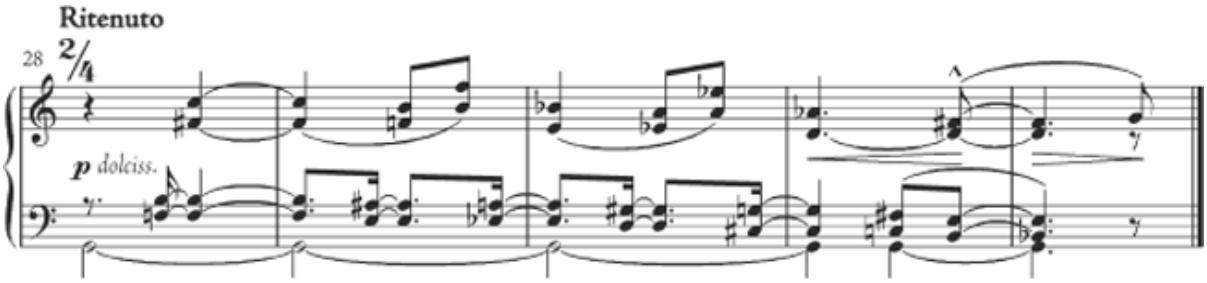


ex. 7-11a Béla Bartók, Bagatelle, Op. 6, no. 11, mm. 1–18

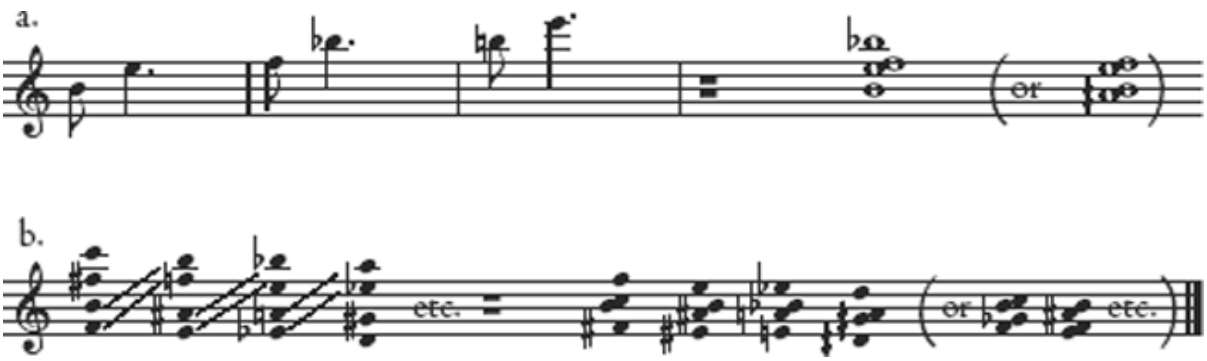
For its harmonic extension (or "verticalization"), see Ex. 7-11c, the coda of Bagatelle no. 8. The harmonies suspended there over the tonic pedal look like pairs of tritones at the minor ninth (=semitone); but that is the inversion of the "four-note unit" at the climax of Bagatelle no. 11 (Ex. 7-12). In either case, the harmony can be described as the atonal triad plus its inversion, analogous to an ordinary triad expanded to include both the major and the minor third. As we will see, it is the "Bartók chord" par excellence. For reasons that will emerge later, it is often called the "Z-tetrachord" by analysts.



ex. 7-11b Béla Bartók, Bagatelle, Op. 6, no. 11, mm. 55–60

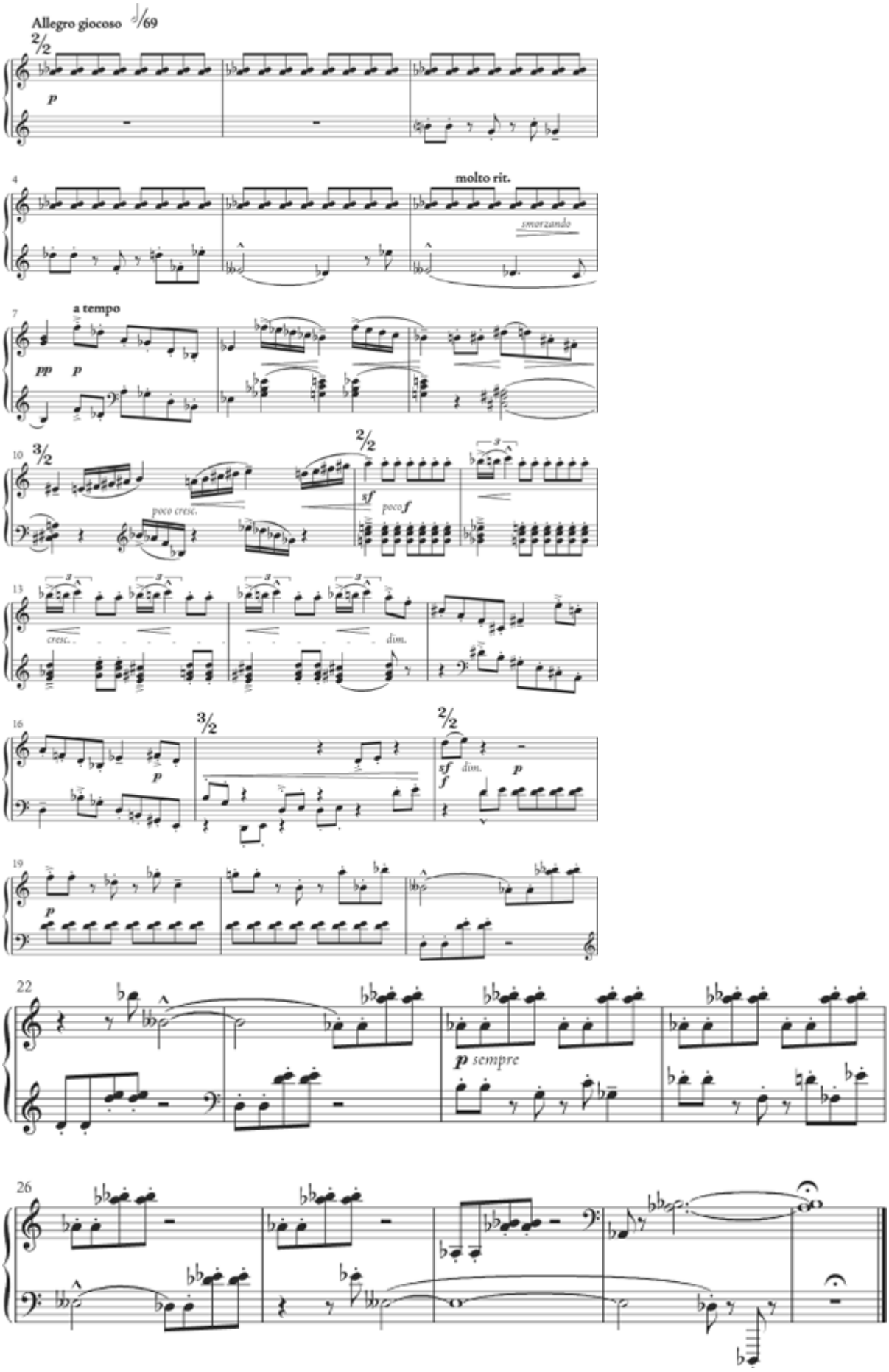


ex. 7-11c Béla Bartók, Bagatelle, Op. 6, no. 8, end



ex. 7-12 "Z-tetrachords" in Béla Bartók, Bagatelles, Op. 6, nos. 8 and 11

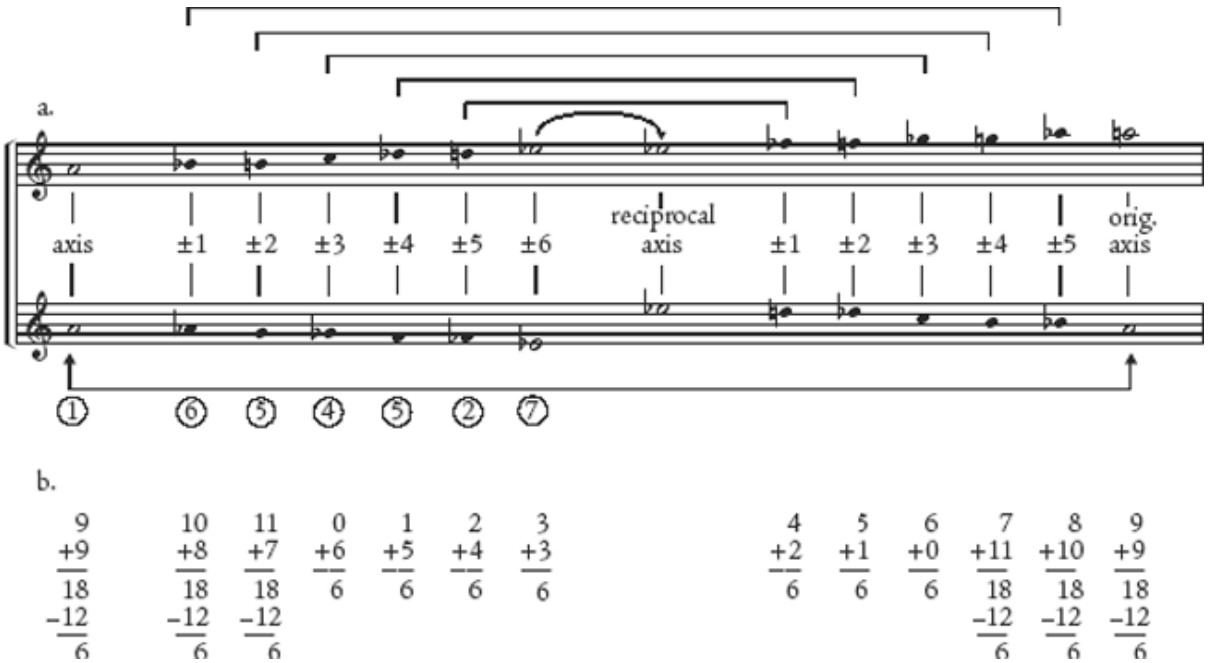
For the ultimate in Bartókian symmetry, at least as expressed within the *Fourteen Bagatelles*, consider the second item in the set (Ex. 7-13). Bagatelle no. 2 was a recital favorite of the composer, who often played it as an encore and recorded it more than once. The catchy opening is a demonstration of "axial symmetry," wherein every interval is invertible around the same "axis pitch," in this case A. The opening dyad, A≠B≠, is A ± one semitone. The third BG, with which the left-hand melody begins, is A ± two semitones. The next interval in the left hand, CG≠, is A ± three semitones, and so it goes: D≠F = A ± 4 and DF≠ = A ± 5. The whole complex, reminiscent of a similar array that governed the harmony of *Salome* by Richard Strauss, Bartók's early hero (see chapter 1), is summed up in Ex. 7-14. Not that Bartók was the only composer to "inherit" the technique from Strauss: we have already spotted it, in more rudimentary form, in Webern's fourth Bagatelle for string quartet (Ex. 6-26b).


Allegro giocoso ♩/69
molto rit.
smorzando
a tempo
poco cresc.
poco f
cresc.
dim.
p sempre

ex. 7-13 Béla Bartók, Bagatelle, Op. 6, no. 2

But in the fifth measure of Ex. 7-13 comes an interesting deviation. As Ex. 7-14 shows (and as we may remember from *Salome*), any axis pitch—that is, the point where two chromatic scales in contrary motion intersect at the unison or octave—will have a counterpart at the tritone (that is, the other place where the scales will so intersect). That point is reached at the end of the Bagatelle's fourth measure with the high E≠ in the left hand, to be followed (we can only expect) by another E≠ an octave below to complete the pattern. Instead, Bartók writes E≠≠. The unexpected note might either be viewed as a "wrong note" joke or as a sort of deceptive cadence. Either way, an unstated (or unreached) goal is acknowledged.

But this is momentous. Implying a goal in advance is something that in our experience only "tonal" harmony, with its preassigned functions and directed motion, can do. Bartók's axial symmetry has managed to do the same: it has identified E≠ with a function that can be either fulfilled or evaded. And of course the axis itself, the A about which there has been so much to say, has been similarly implied rather than sounded outright. And yet its ruling presence is felt "behind the scenes" just the way an implied tonic (like the A major or minor triad that is forecast but never sounded through the whole Prelude to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*) can rule in absentia in tonal music. Axial symmetry, then, can be construed (or deployed) as an alternate form of functional tonality that takes the chromatic scale rather than the circle of fifths as its basis.



ex. 7-14 Axial symmetry in Béla Bartók, Bagatelle, Op. 6, no. 2

And just as harmonic functions can furnish a form-defining trajectory for tonal music (most basically, the binary form with its movement from tonic to dominant and back by way of a Far Out Point), so can the reciprocal axes in a symmetrical array. That is precisely how Bartók's Bagatelle no. 2 is laid out. The cadence on E≠, evaded in m. 5, is finally made (in a conventional "tonal" way) in mm. 7–8. The section thus inaugurated plays with another symmetrical formation that encompasses both A and E≠: namely the /0 3 6 9/ circle of minor thirds with which Bartók had been familiar since encountering it in the music of Liszt. All the triadic roots in mm. 8–12 —E≠, C, and F♯—are drawn from it. Only one member, A, is withheld; and that, of course, is to forecast it as the final goal of the bagatelle's tonal trajectory.

The approach could not be neater. Beginning in m. 17 the music begins to stutter on the dyad ED, which is eventually played (mm. 18–21) as a pulsing harmonic interval like the A≠B≠ pair at the outset. And just as the original dyad initiated a regular expansion to approach the E≠pole, so the ED dyad and its consequences point us back toward A—an A that, whimsically, is never allowed to materialize (except disguised as B≠≠

resolving to A≠). An evasive action similar to the one in mm. 5–6 is employed in mm. 20–23 to skirt the A and prepare a return, instead, of the A≠B≠ dyad from which the piece had taken off. The coda reproduces the first 6 measures with registers adjusted, and the D≠from mm. 5–6, which makes consonances with both A≠ and B≠, is allowed to end the piece as a specious tonic—a sort of "tonal" pun.

Notes:

(11) Bartók, "The Folk Songs of Hungary" (1928); *Béla Bartók's Essays*, p. 331.

(12) *Ibid*., p. 338.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
George Perle

A BIT OF THEORY

Chapter: CHAPTER 7 Social Validation
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

As in the case of Schoenberg, whose creative methods were later explained by analysts using concepts (like the rudimentary "set theory" we explored in chapter 6) that the composer never knew or needed, so Bartók's symmetrical structures were rationalized long after his death according to "paradigms" or models with which he was probably unfamiliar as such. The fact that analytical methods are sometimes anachronistic does not necessarily lessen their appropriateness or their explanatory potential (or else we would have long since stopped using Roman numerals to label chord functions in Bach or Mozart). As explained with reference to Schoenberg, we often need them in order to infer and then demonstrate to our own satisfaction the premises on which the composer was relying a priori.

A case in point is a handy method devised by the composer George Perle (b. 1915) to represent symmetrical arrays like the one Bartók employed in the second Bagatelle, and more importantly, to compare them. It may already have occurred to the reader that, with its "pluses and minuses" arranged around a stationary center, axial symmetry à la Bartók or Strauss or Webern is a "zero-sum game." That is, whatever is added on one side is taken away on the other, so that the "sum"—in this case A (or E≠) —does not change. If that sum could be represented numerically, there would be a means of classifying axes, of measuring progressions from one to another, and (most important, analytically) of assigning any interval or chord one may chance to encounter to its potential place within a symmetrical array.

The trick is done by numbering the pitch classes from an arbitrary starting point on C (like the "fixed doh" of French-style *solfège*, or sight-singing technique), thus,

C = 0

C♯D♯ = 1

D = 2

D♯E♯ = 3

E = 4

F = 5

F♯G♯ = 6

G = 7

G♯A♯ = 8

A = 9

A♯B♯ = 10

B = 11

and then calculating the sums of the two chromatic scales whose intersections define the symmetrical array. That is what is done in Ex. 7-14b. The array in Ex. 7-14a begins with one of the points of intersection: 2 As. A being nine semitones above C, the sum of two As is 9 + 9, or 18. But since we are dealing with idealized pitch classes rather than actual pitches, we need to conceptualize everything within a single ideal octave; hence 12 is subtracted from all sums 12 or above, since 11 defines the limit of an octave, after which "zero" comes again. Thus the index number or "sum" of our two As is 6. And so is the index number for the reciprocal point of intersection, the two E≠s (3 + 3), around which the same series of dyads take their place but in the opposite order.

As Perle's method represents them, all axes (points of intersection between chromatic scales in contrary motion) have the same index numbers as their reciprocals. In other words, whereas with individual pitches we assume "octave equivalency," in the case of axes we assume "tritone equivalency," thus:

Table 7.1

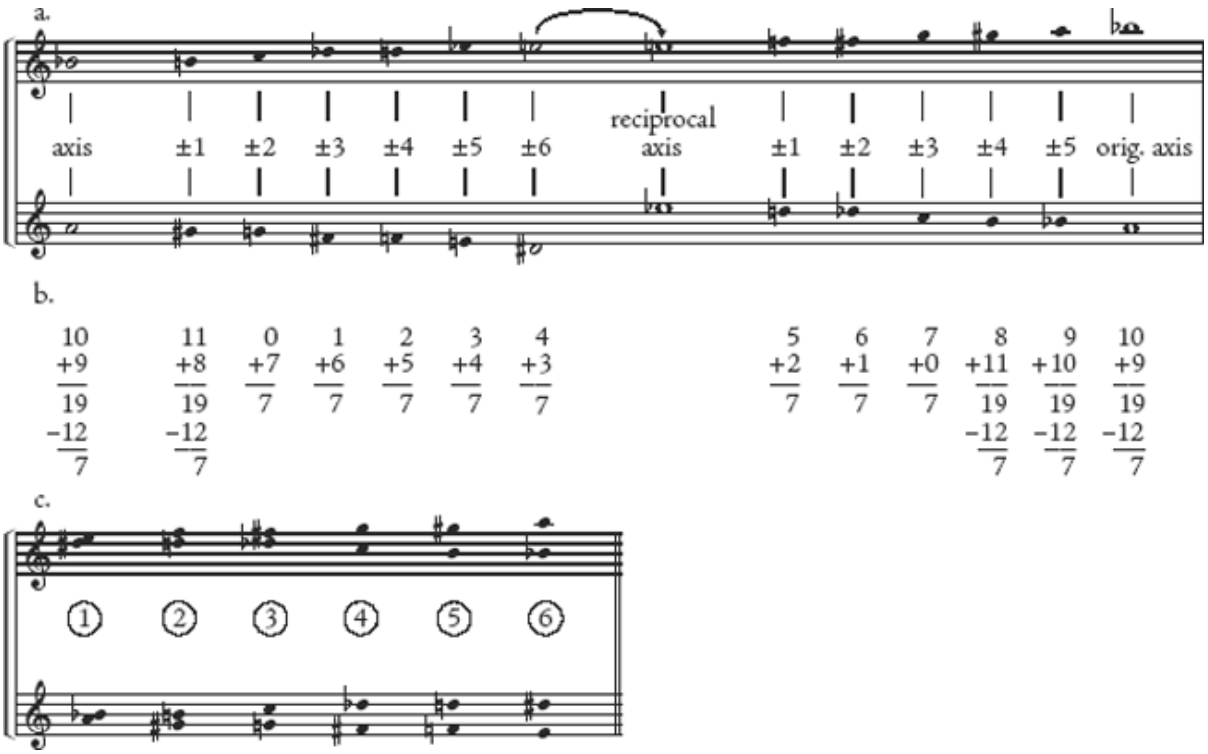
AXIS PAIR	*INDEX NUMBER*	*SUMS*
C–F♭G≠	0	0 + 0 or (6 + 6 – 12)
C♯D≠ – G	2	1 + 1 or (7 + 7 – 12)
D – G♯A≠	4	2 + 2 or (8 + 8 – 12)
D♯E≠ – A	6	3 + 3 or (9 + 9 – 12)
E – A♯B≠	8	4 + 4 or (10 + 10 – 12)
F – B	10	5 + 5 or (11 + 11 – 12)

The odd index numbers belong to arrays in which the chromatic scales in contrary motion cross without actually intersecting on unisons or octaves. Whereas the intervals in an intersecting array like the one in Ex. 7-14 are limited to the intervals that contain an even number of semitones, namely M2/m7, M3/m6, and aug4/dim5 in addition to the octave/unison (o), the intervals in a nonintersecting array, like the one in Ex. 7-15, will have the complementary set—m2/M7, m3/M6, P4/P5—in which all the intervals contain an odd number of semitones. As noted above, a symmetrical array can have either a single or a dual axis, depending on whether it contains an odd or even number of members. Thus the array of dual axes and their tritone reciprocals (taking the minor second as the axis since it is closest to the unison) will look like this:

TABLE 7.2

AXIS PAIR	*INDEX NUMBER*	*SUMS*
C/C♯D≠—F♯G≠/G	1	0 + 1 or (6 + 7 – 12)
C♯D≠/D—G/G♯A≠	3	1 + 2 or (7 + 8 – 12)
D/D♯E≠—G♯A≠/A	5	2 + 3 or (8 + 9 – 12)
D♯E≠/E—A/A♯B≠	7	3 + 4 or (9 + 10 – 12)

AXIS PAIR	*INDEX NUMBER*	*SUMS*
E/F—A♯B≠/B	9	4 + 5 or (10 + 11 − 12)
F/F♯G≠—B/C	11	5 + 6 or (11 + 0)



ex. 7-15 A representative "odd" array (sum 7)

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Béla Bartók

Fugue: 20th century

SYMMETRICAL FUGUE, SYMMETRICAL SONATA

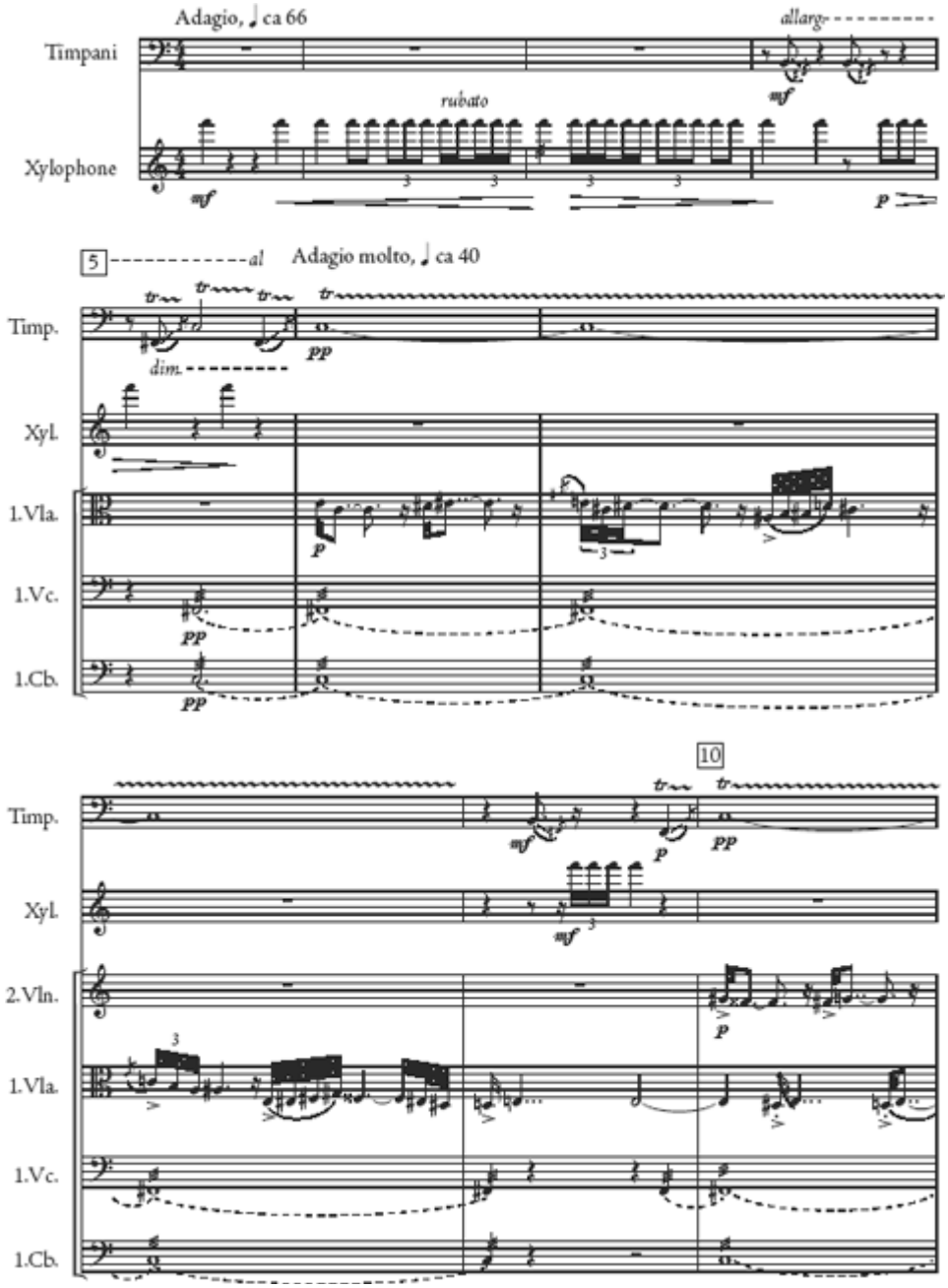
Chapter: CHAPTER 7 Social Validation
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

To show how thoroughly (and literally) the relationships mapped out in these charts and diagrams could function as an alternative tonal system (easily grasped by the ear without the help of charts or diagrams), we can look ahead to two of Bartók's best-known works, composed considerably later in his career. Once their basic outlines were established in the music he composed around 1908, his methods served him faithfully to the end, making his style a remarkably consistent one over the whole course of his creative life.

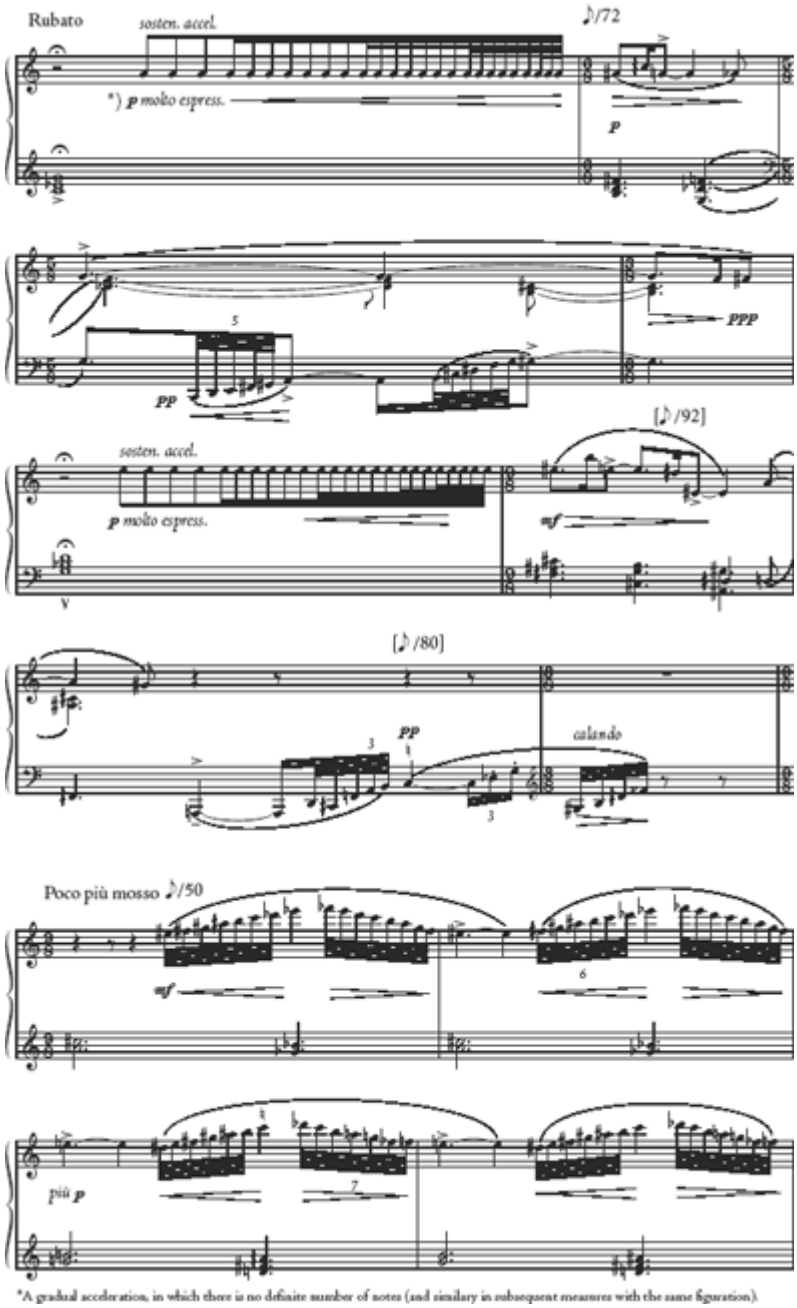
We will start with the later of the two, *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*, composed in 1936 on commission from Paul Sacher (1906–99), a Swiss conductor who had married into a wealthy industrial family and paid many famous composers to write music suitable for the organization he led, the Basel Chamber Orchestra. We will start with it because its first movement, remarkably, projects the selfsame tonal trajectory as Bagatelle no. 2 of 1908, but over a far longer span of time and with far from whimsical effect.

Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta is a four-movement composition comparable in that respect to a traditional symphony. Its movements, however, possibly in keeping with the fact that it was commissioned by a chamber orchestra whose main business at first was performing an eighteenth-century repertoire, are in a slow-fast-slow-fast sequence more reminiscent of an old Italian concerto grosso. The fast movements are distinctly "neonationalist" in style, being cast in a modernistic idiom obviously based on folklore. The third movement is typical of a genre Bartók called "night music"—not, however, in the sense of the eighteenth-century convivial *notturno* or serenade, which was aristocratic party music; nor in that of the Chopinesque nocturne, which was a dreamy mood piece; but in the sense of a night spent camping outdoors, in proximity to enigmatic, indefinable sounds of nature.

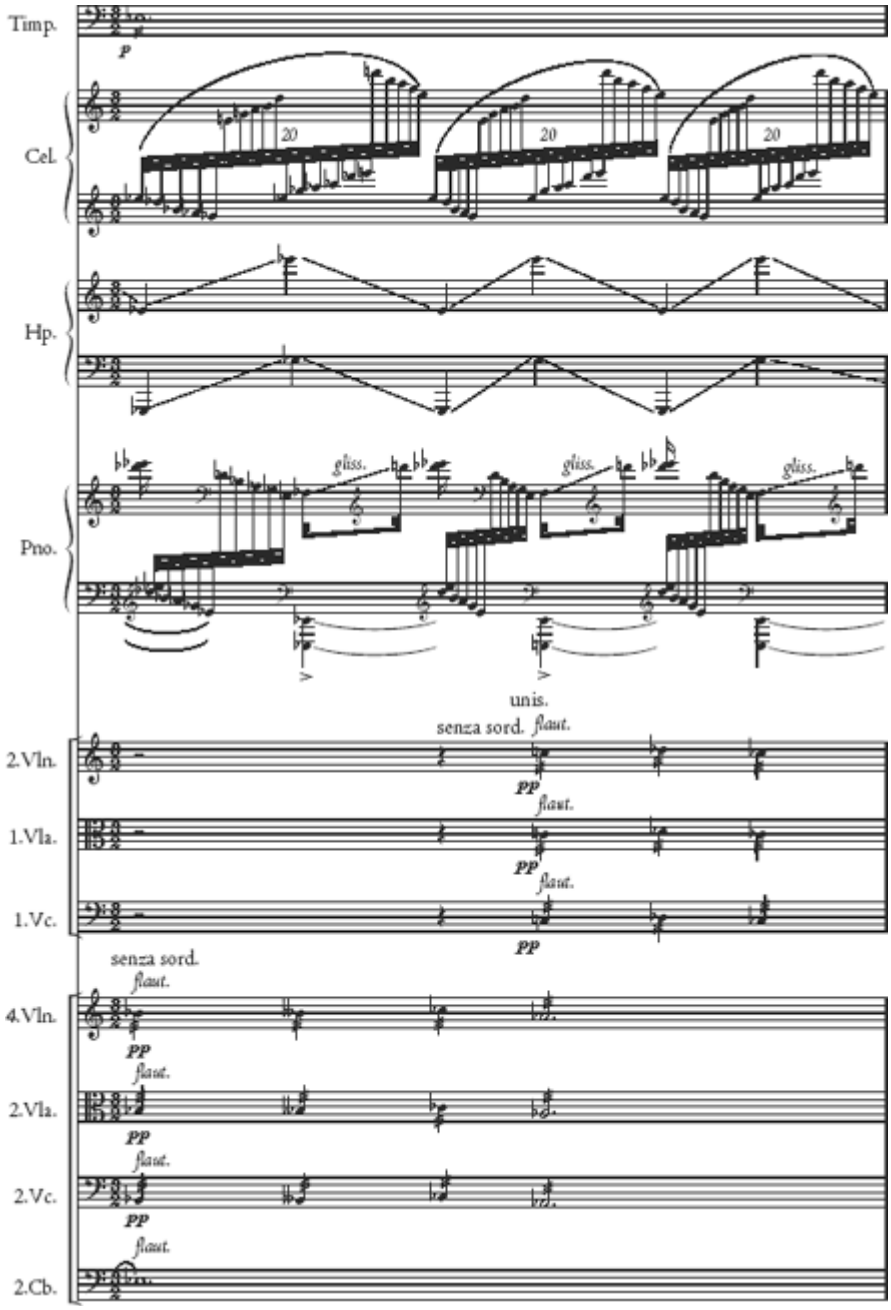
The night music in *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta* is particularly noted for its pioneering use of the timpani glissando, a technique made possible only a few years earlier when improved models of pedal timpani became available. (Bartók's first use of this uncanny effect, possibly the first by anyone, was in his *Cantata profana* of 1930, a setting of a folk legend in verse, where it accompanies a magical transformation.) In Ex. 7-16a, which reproduces the first page of the score, the timpani glissandos are cast in dialogue with another typical Bartók night sound, a nattering diminution-augmentation or accelerando-ritardando effect on a single note, here played by the xylophone. (The first partial use of this effect in Bartók's music, indeed his first "night piece," is found—not surprisingly—in that same remarkable set of *Bagatelles*, op. 6, the crucible of Bartók's maximalistic style; see Ex. 7-16b.)



ex. 7-16a Béla Bartók, *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, III, mm. 1–10



ex. 7-16b Béla Bartók, Bagatelle, Op. 6, no. 12, mm. 1–8



ex. 7-16c Béla Bartók, *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, III, 1 after letter B

Against this background, the violas enter with a melody that in its chromaticism is obviously no folk tune, but which nevertheless bears traces of "Hungarianness" in its rhythm, its tiny accented note-values on the beat aping the short tonic stress patterns of Magyar speech as if placing a human "figure" against a landscape. Accompanying the viola melody is a sustained tremolo in the lower strings that sounds the tritone C/F♯ as a pedal that will last until m. 16. Although we must again tantalizingly postpone pursuit of its ramifications, it is worth noting one more fact: the pedal tritone, plus the xylophone pitch (F) and the pitches of the timpani glissandos (B/F♯)—in other words, all the pitches that accompany the "Hungarian" melody—together form what has already been cryptically identified as a "Z-tetrachord." Now compare Ex. 7-16c, drawn from a later passage in the third movement, where the rustling night sounds (represented by a murmured cacophony of simultaneous arpeggios or glissandos from celesta, harp, and piano) reach their peak. The pedal, now in the double basses and timpani, has moved to a doubled E≠, while the glissandos pit black-key pentatonic scales, of which E≠ is a member, against various scales from which it stands out:

white-key pentatonic, whole-tone, white-key glissandos. Without implying that Debussy would have necessarily recognized or sanctioned it, the texture here could be aptly characterized as maximalized "impressionism."

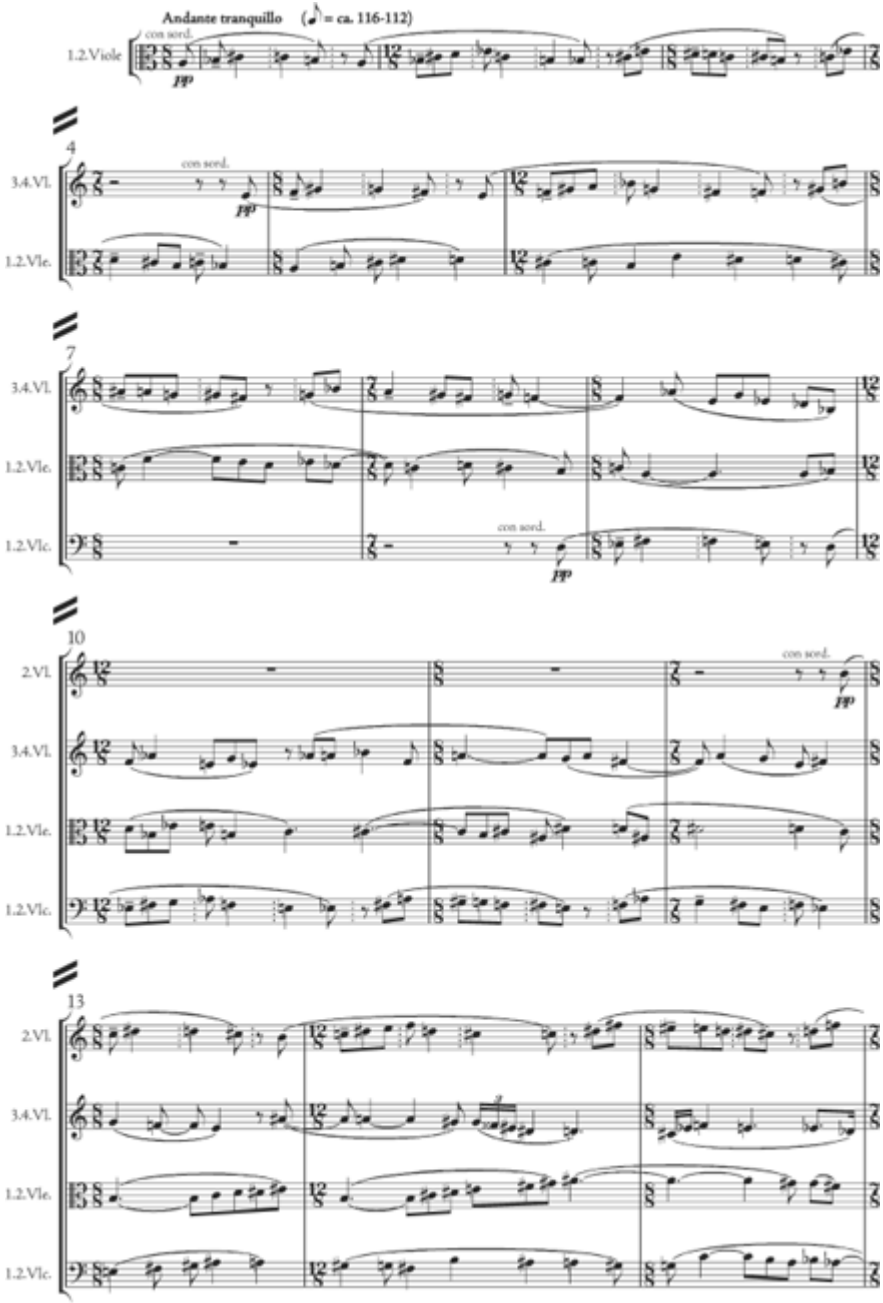
Putting the pedals together—C/F♯ + E≠—and noting that they make up a diminished triad, we might be tempted to relate the harmony here to the /0 3 6 9/ circle of minor thirds that is so familiar by now from its use by Liszt, Ravel, and Stravinsky, all composers with whose works Bartók was enthusiastically familiar, and that we have already observed in Bagatelle no. 2. But where Liszt, Ravel, and Stravinsky would most likely have integrated the circle of thirds with its octatonic scalar extension (a technique to which Bartók was certainly no stranger), we now have another, uniquely Bartókian context with which to ally it—namely, the "sum 6" symmetrical array already displayed in Ex. 7-14, where E≠ is one of the axes along with A, and where the C/F♯G≠ pair is situated right between the axes on both sides.

Excellent evidence that this was Bartók's own way of conceptualizing the harmonic symmetry that his pedals expressed can be found in the notation of the glissandi in Ex. 7-16c, especially the upward-sweeping white-key glissandos in the piano part. Ex. 7-14 was introduced in conjunction with the Bagatelle no. 2 and used the note-spellings found there, including F≠ in place of the more usual E, presumably so that the expansion from F≠/D to the axis octave E≠ could be represented as a pair of leading-tone resolutions, as in a traditional augmented sixth chord. The F≠–D spelling is retained in Ex. 7-16c.

But anyone encountering that passage in the context of a performance of *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*, or a sequential perusal of the score, would have had even better evidence that Bartók conceptualized its tonality in terms of the "sum 6" array in Ex. 7-14; for the implications of that array are worked out both systematically and startlingly over the course of the first movement. Perhaps in response to the concerto grosso idea (also reflected in the occasional *concertante* writing for keyboard instruments and string soloists in the fast movements), Bartók cast the movement as a fugue. Here is how he described it, in his own dry and halting English, in the preface to a revised edition of the score, published after he had already taken wartime refuge in America:

> On certain principles fairly strictly executed form of a fugue, i.e. the 2nd entry appears one fifth higher, the 4th again one fifth higher than the 2nd, the 6th, 8th and so forth again a fifth higher than the preceding one. The 3rd, 5th, 7th, etc. on the other hand enter each a fifth lower. After the remotest key—E flat—has been reached (the climax of the movement) the following entries render the theme in contrary movement until the fundamental key—A—is reached again, after which a short Coda follows.[13]

For the sake (he evidently thought) of clarity, Bartók's description emphasizes the procedural similarity between his fugue and the familiar textbook rules of fugue writing. A traditional fugue begins with "an entry one fifth higher," and so does Bartók's. But his fugue keeps on mounting higher—and plunging lower—by fifths, as may be seen in Ex. 7-17a, which shows the start of the process: violas starting on axis-pitch A, the third and fourth violins entering at the fifth above (E), the cellos at the fifth below (D), the second violins another fifth above (B). A "maximalized fugue," then? Yes, but to leave it at that would do scant justice to the plan. To take it all in at once, and also see its relationship to the other music of Bartók that we have looked at, we need a diagram (Diagram 7-1 shown following Ex. 7-17a). Numbers in parentheses in Diagram 7-1 refer to the measures in which each entry of the subject takes place; numbers in brackets show the relationship of each vertical pair to the axis pitch as in Ex. 7-14.



ex. 7-17a Béla Bartók, *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, I, mm. 1–15

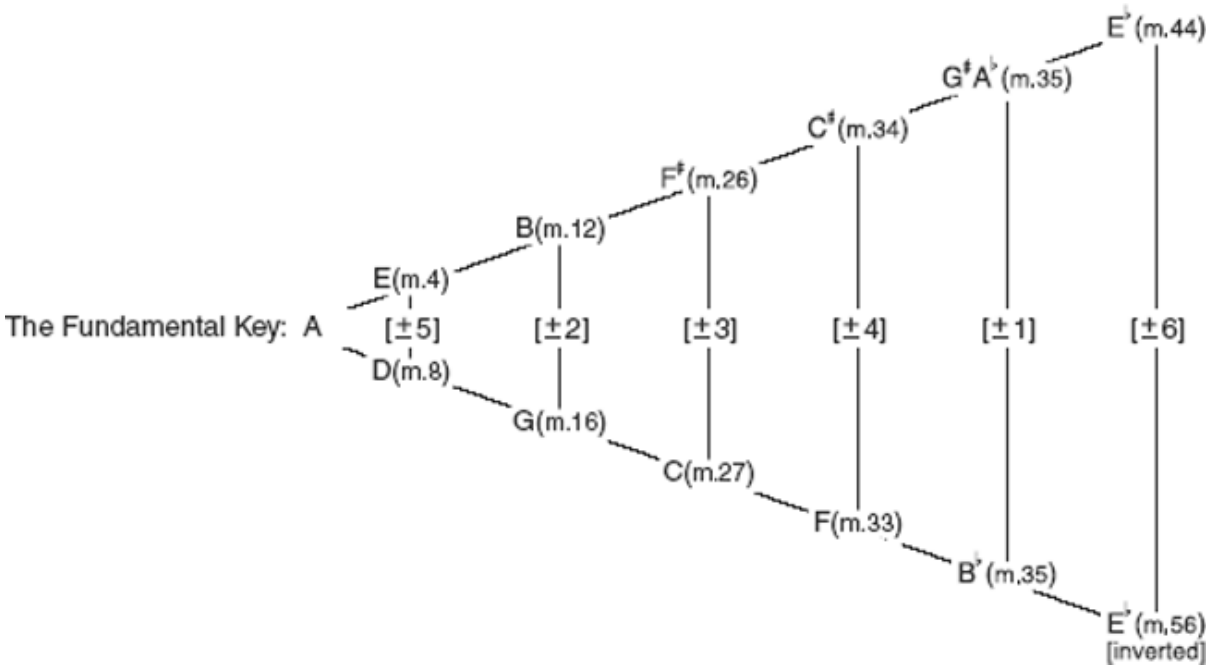


DIAGRAM 7-1

By pairing the entries at the upper fifth with those at the lower fifth, as in the diagram, we can see that Bartók's "fugal" procedure is in reality another way of projecting the same "sum 6" symmetrical matrix from which Bagatelle no. 2 had been derived, but doing it in a grand way that covers an imposing span of time and invokes a long and distinguished fugue-writing heritage that it, in effect, caps. Each of the pairs in the diagram above has its counterpart in Ex. 7-14.

The crucial theoretical point that Bartók's fugue thus demonstrates is the way in which the circle of fifths can be mapped onto the chromatic scale (the "circle of semitones"), the only other interval cycle to exhaust all the pitch classes, so as to traverse the same progression from an axis pitch to its reciprocal. The achievement of E≠ (Ex. 7-17b), which takes place in both the ascending and descending "voices" as conceptualized in the diagram, provides the same tangible sense of climax as the continually foreshadowed but evaded E≠s had done in the bagatelle. That sense of climax or completion conditions the same out-and-back tonal trajectory, utterly different yet wholly analogous to the out-and-back trajectories of tonal music. The much-truncated coda, which begins with the upbeat to the fourth measure of Ex. 7-17b in the cellos and basses with the subject in inversion, spells out the idea of axial symmetry in as many ways as Bartók could think of. At the very end (Ex. 7-17c), in a summary that manages to be both grave and witty, the two violin parts play the second phrase of the subject, covering exactly the range between the primary axis (A) and its reciprocal (E≠), in note-against-note counterpoint with its inversion. It is almost as if they were actually performing a slightly abbreviated version of Ex. 7-14 itself.

Notes:

(13) Bartók, *Music for String Instruments, Percussion and Celesta* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1939), p. iii.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online

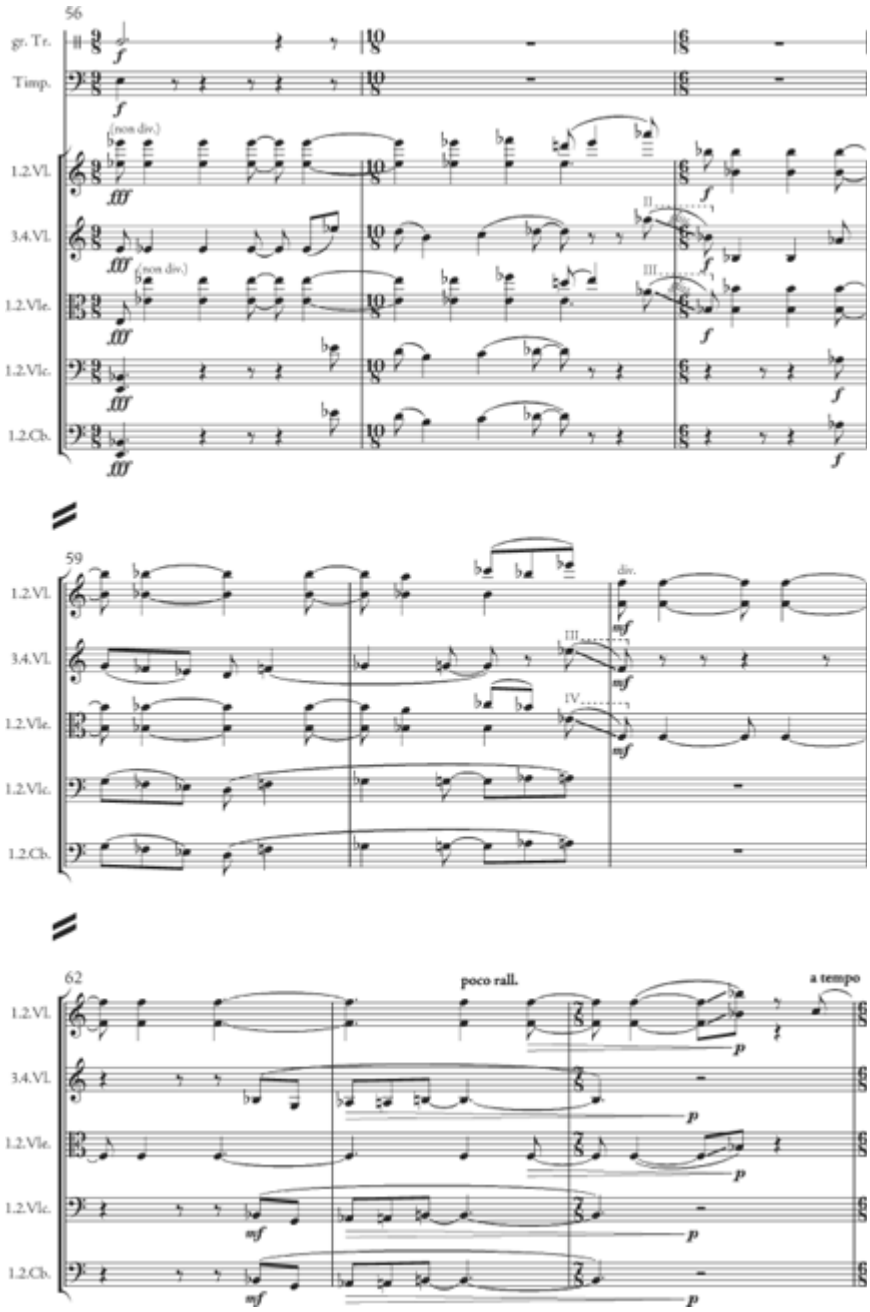
Béla Bartók

String quartet: 1915–40

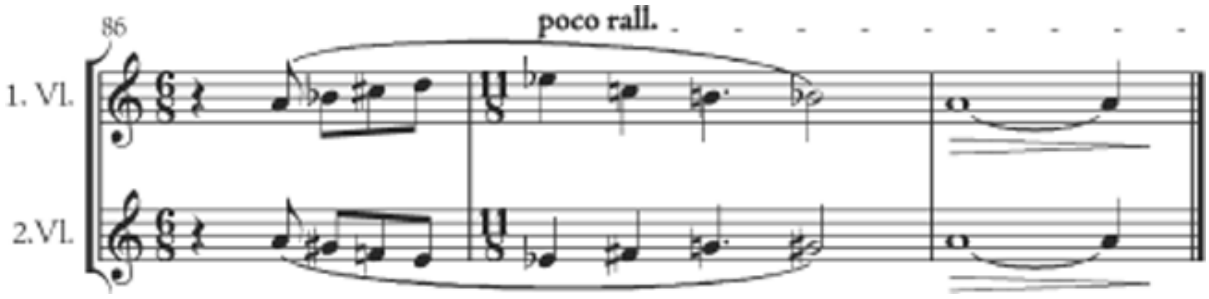
Tetrachord

A NEW TONAL SYSTEM?

Chapter: CHAPTER 7 Social Validation
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin



ex. 7-17b Béla Bartók, *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, I, mm. 56–64



ex. 7-17c Béla Bartók, *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, I, mm. 86–88

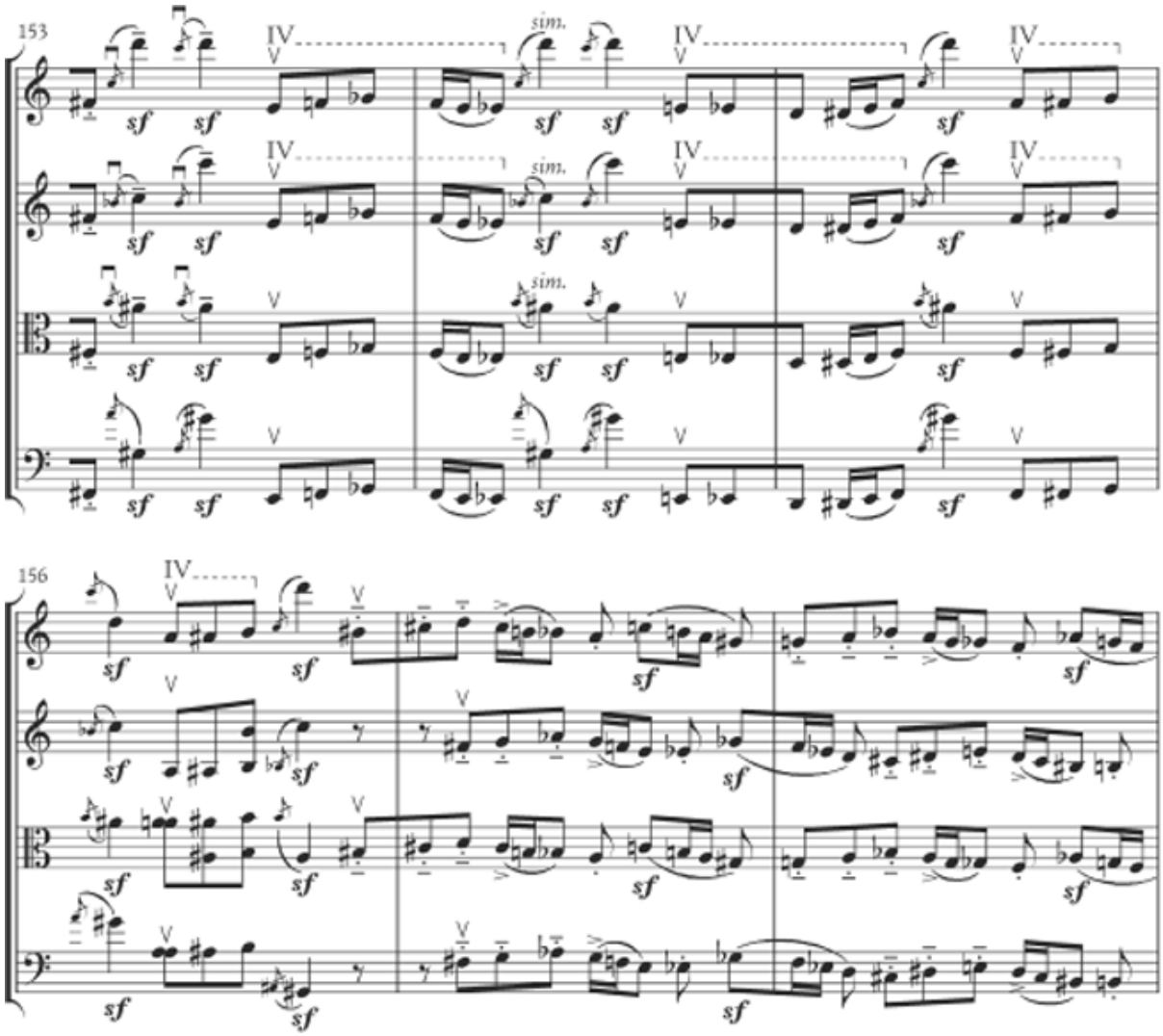
Among Bartók's most impressive achievements were his six string quartets, all of them very elaborate major works, and all very different from one another. They were composed between 1908 and 1939, a period that encompassed virtually his entire mature career in Europe. Bartók's intense cultivation of the genre, one of the emblems of the European "classical" tradition, attests to his concerns both for synthesizing the particularly national with the universal, and for conceiving the universal in terms of tradition and advancement in equal measure.

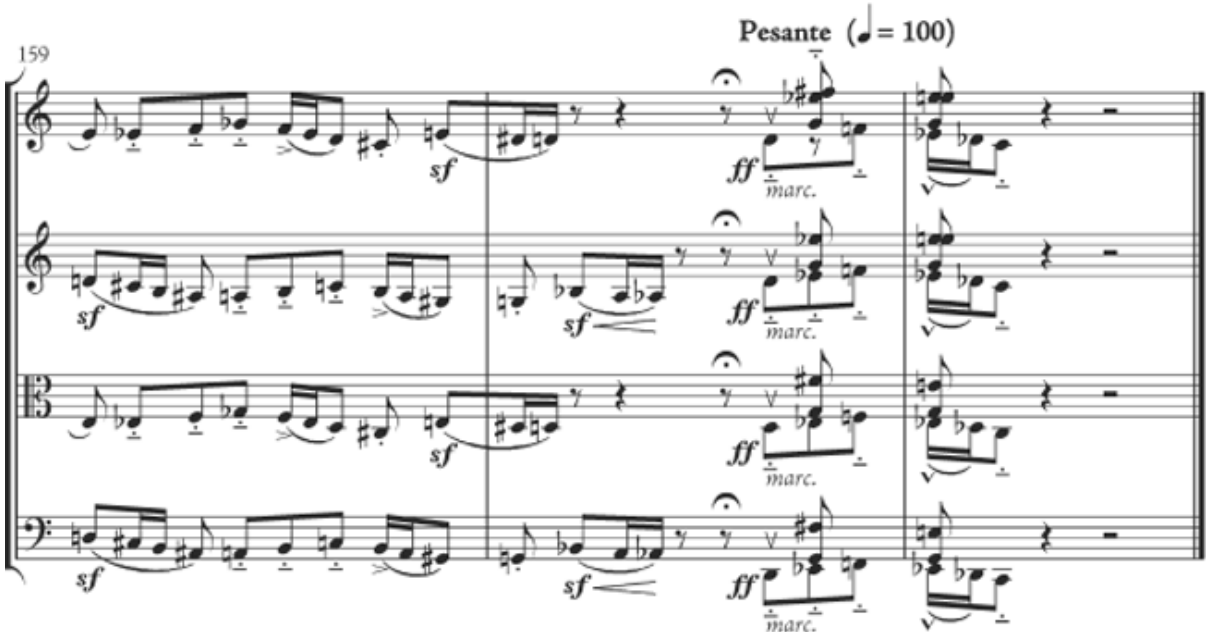
The Fourth String Quartet (1928), completed six years earlier than *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*, is often looked upon as the culmination or far out point of Bartók's maximalistic explorations. It brings his preoccupation with symmetry to a peak that encompasses two musical dimensions: both the "vertical" dimension of harmony, as in the works we have already considered, and the "horizontal" dimension of form as it unfolds in time. In it he deployed for the first time the all-encompassing symmetry of "bridge form," as he called it, meaning the casting of the constituent sections in a movement (like the nocturnal slow movement of the *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*) or even the constituent movements in a full-length "classical" composition like a string quartet, in the form of a palindrome.

Like several of the works that followed it (including the Fifth Quartet, the Second Piano Concerto, and the Concerto for Orchestra composed in America), the Fourth Quartet contains five movements, in which a unique central movement is flanked fore and aft by neighbors of similar character, while the outer movements draw on a common fund of thematic or motivic material. But when representing the form schematically (as in his preface to the Fourth Quartet), Bartók did not designate the sections simply as ABCBA as one might label the sections of a rondo, but rather ABCB′A′, to denote his concern that there be a dynamic forward momentum as well as a sense of return, as in the classical sonata form. To quote László Somfai, the leading Hungarian Bartók scholar, despite all its "quasi-geometrical symmetry," Bartók's bridge form "is not static: it does not return to its origins but progresses towards a cathartic outcome,"[14] which of course implies a drama.

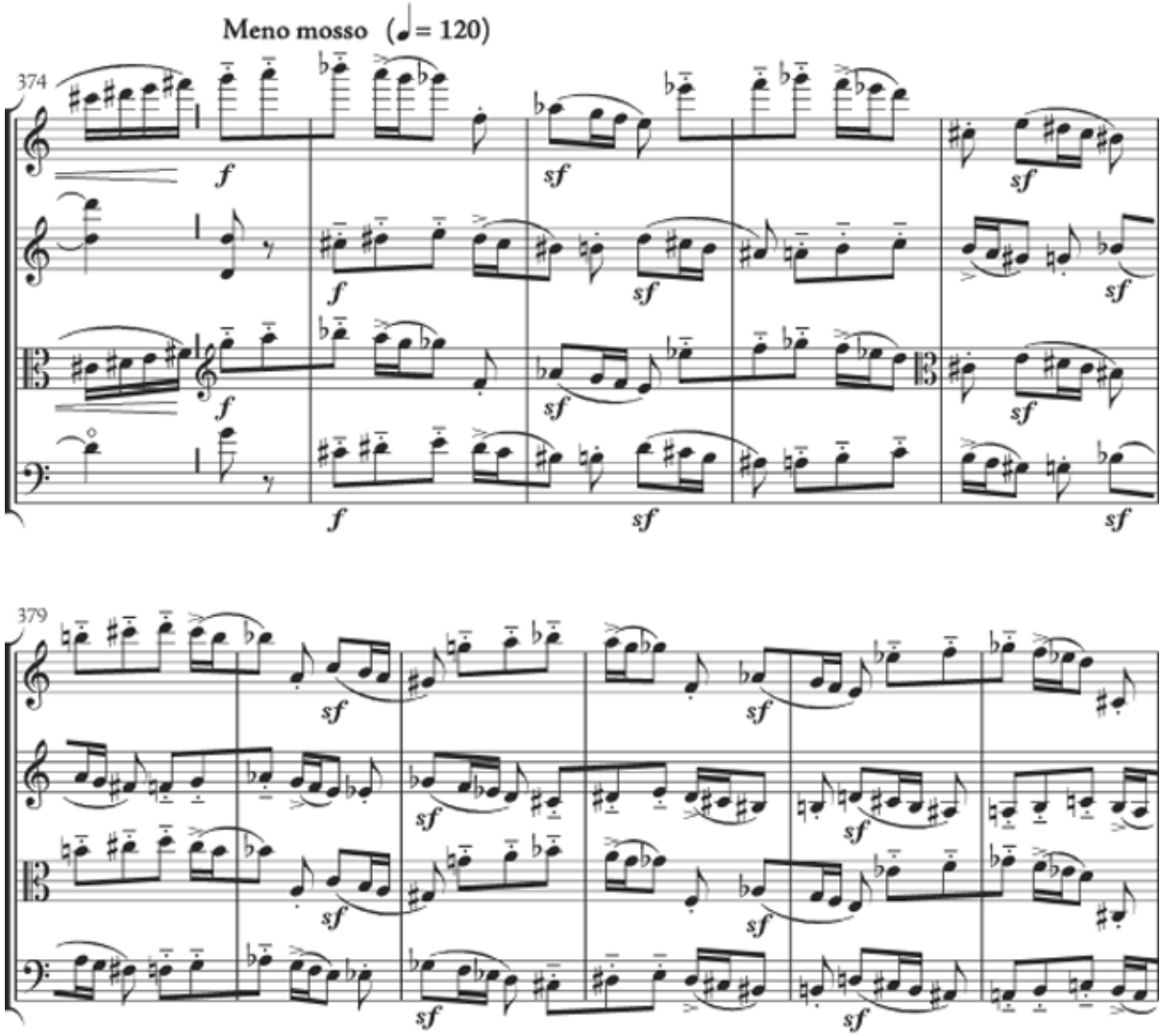
In the Fifth Quartet and the Second Concerto, the middle movement is a wild scherzo flanked by slow movements (the first lyrical, the other stunned and immobile). In the Fourth Quartet (as in the Concerto for Orchestra) the arrangement is just the opposite: the central movement is an almost motionless "night music". In the Quartet this central movement is replete with a Hungarian speech-song intoned by the cello that first alternates, then joins, with nature sounds (prominently including bird calls) against a backdrop of impassively sustained harmonies. The flanking movements in the Fourth Quartet and the Concerto for Orchestra are scherzos. In the Quartet each scherzo is a coloristic tour de force as their performance directions declare: *Prestissimo, con sordino* in the fore position, *Allegretto pizzicato* in the aft. (Here Bartók first used the technique of snapping the string against the fingerboard—designated with —that all string players now call the "Bartók pizz," although it had been anticipated as early as 1673 by the Austrian violinist composer Franz von Biber to imitate cannon-fire in a *Battalia* for strings.)

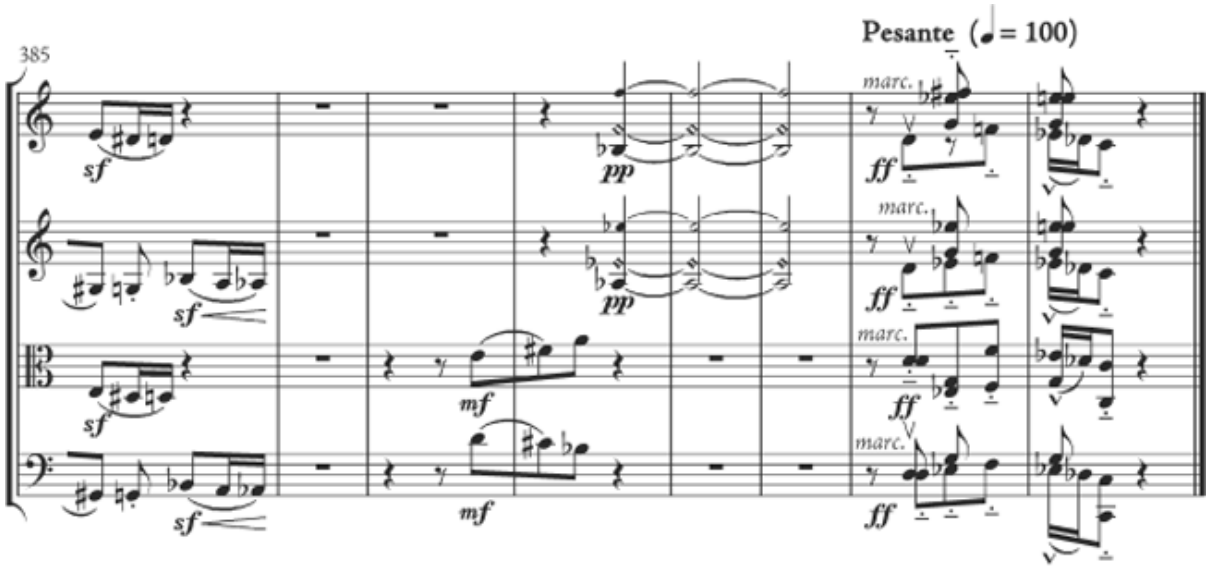
The relationship between the outer movements in the Quartet is most vividly grasped by taking a peek at their respective last pages, which are self-evidently similar (Ex. 7-18). The concluding phrases, marked *pesante* (weighty), are virtually identical. The last movement, however, is no mere reprise of the first. The similar conclusions are reached by differing trajectories; and even on the last pages a closer look reveals telling contrasts of detail. All the motifs on the last page of the quartet (Ex. 7-18b) are diatonic, while those at the end of the first movement (Ex. 7-18a) begin as segments of the chromatic scale and approach the diatonic conclusion only at the very end. The chromatic segments may be found in the finale, too, and dominate its middle, so that the final movement makes a longer, more systematic and decisive approach to a diatonic conclusion that the first movement only briefly foreshadows. Thus even at this preliminary, fairly superficial stage we may discern a sense of ongoing motivic development and resolution linking the outer movements.





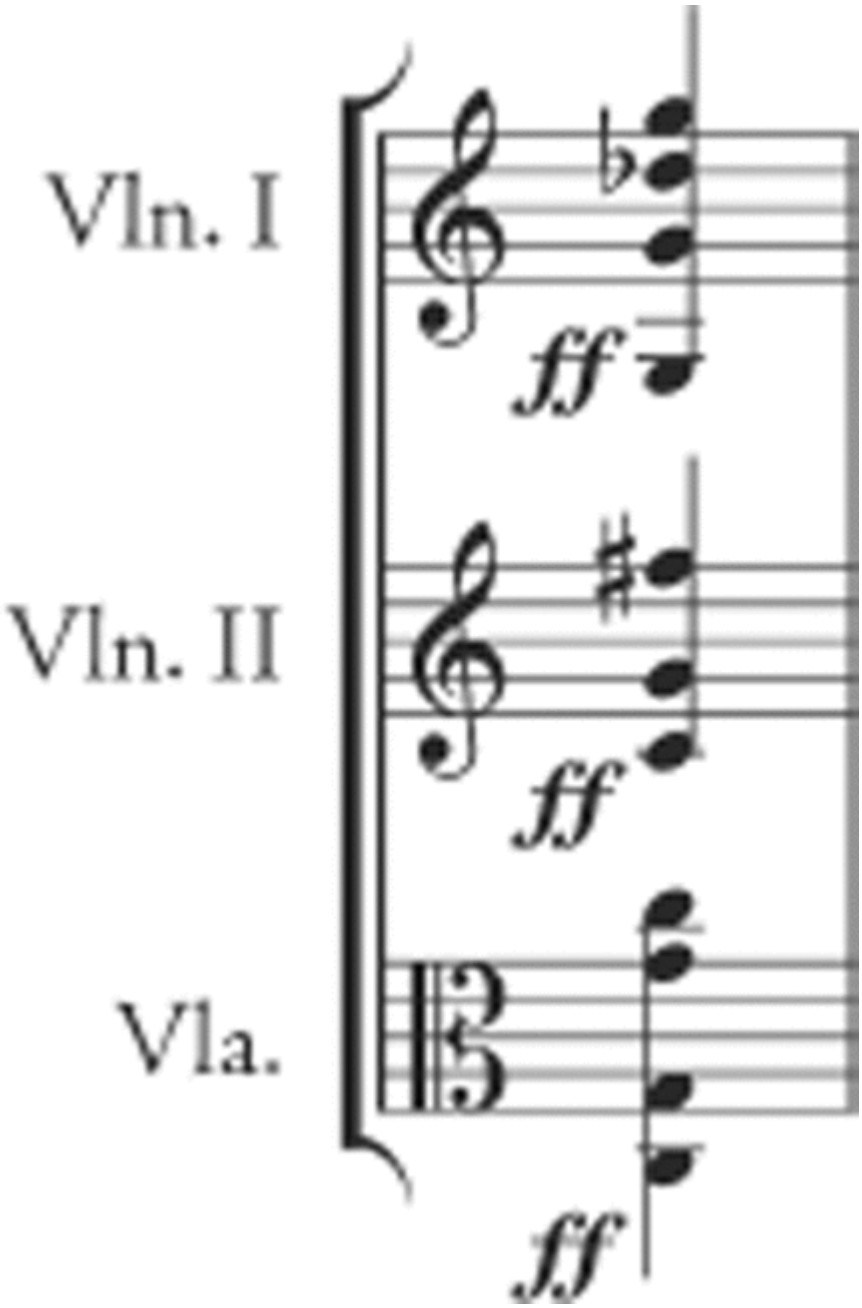
ex. 7-18a Béla Bartók, Quartet no. 4, I, end



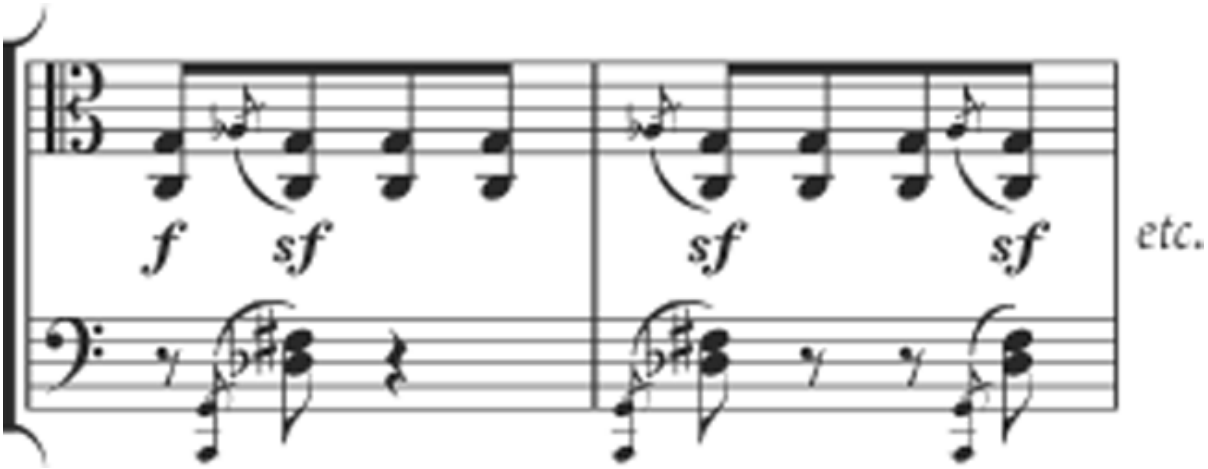


ex. 7-18b Béla Bartók, Quartet no. 4, V, end

But the shared material that unites them actually lies, so to speak, beneath the motivic threshold. A very quick spot survey of the finale will prepare us for a close analysis of the first movement, the longest and most elaborate of the five. (The possibly misleading fact that there are more than twice as many measures in the finale should be balanced against its faster tempo, its two-beat rather than four-beat measure length, and its much lower density of detail.) The finale's very first harmony (Ex. 7-19a) can be our starting point. It contains a thrice-doubled C and a G that is duplicated even more amply (six times in all; though like the C it is sounded in only three octaves). This strongly reinforced fifth is obviously being projected as a "normative" sonority, analogous to a tonic. And indeed there is no measure that does not contain it somewhere until m. 57. But its absence is fleeting. It reasserts itself dramatically in m. 75, and is thereafter again omnipresent for a while, but in conjunction with its counterpart at the tritone, the fifth F♯/C♯. That already rings a Bartókian bell (and a Stravinskian one as well, if we recall *Petrushka* from chapter 3).

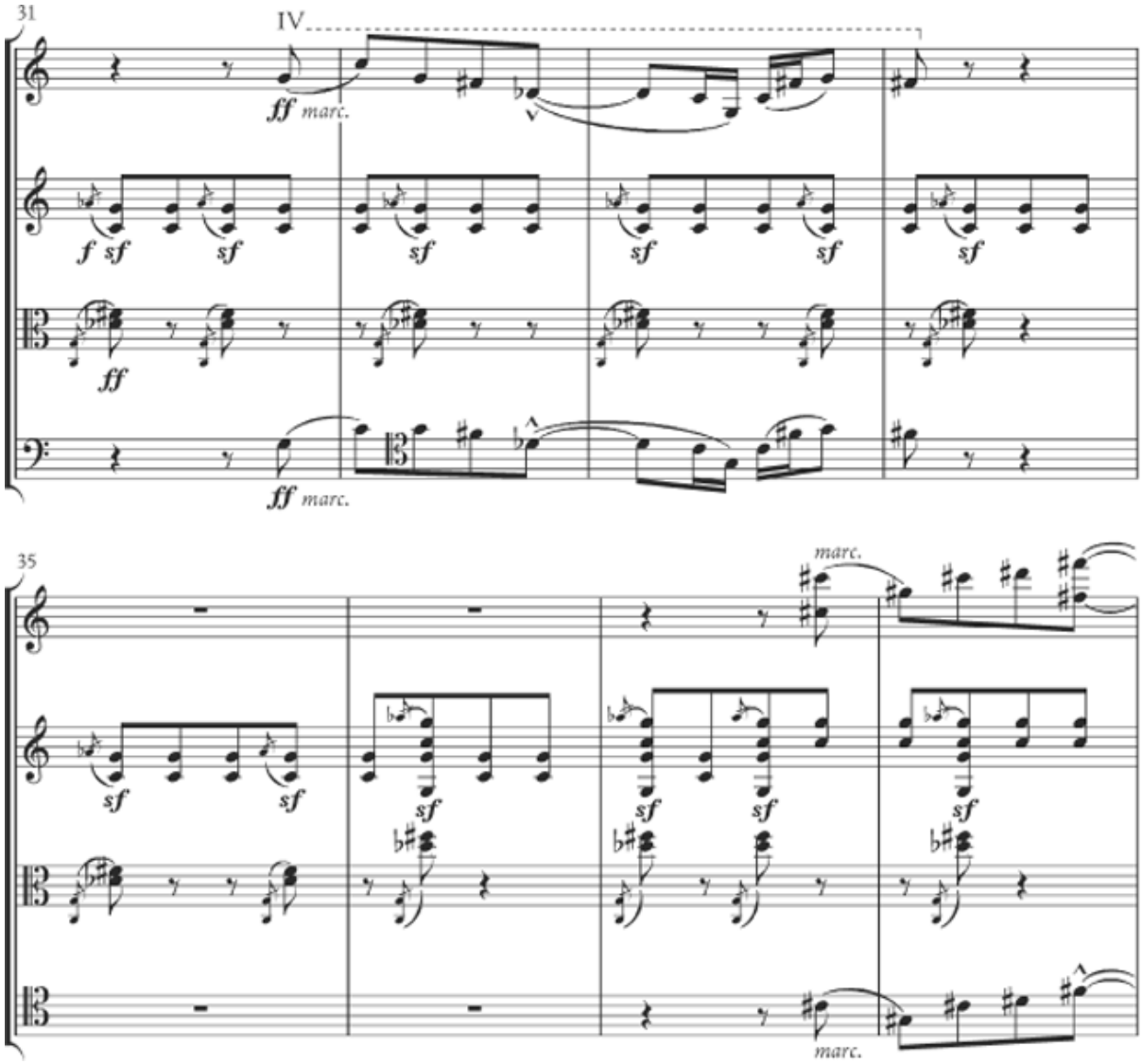


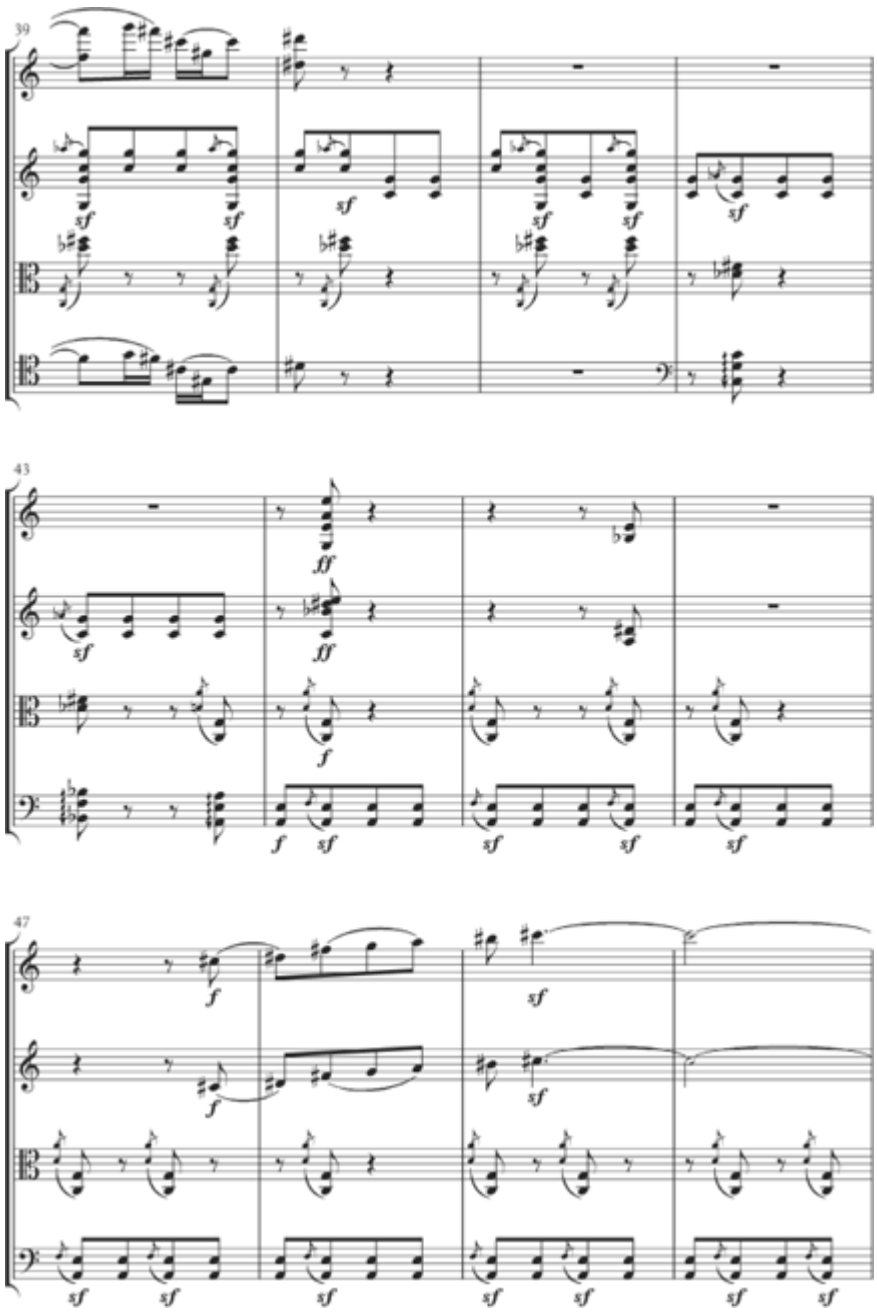
ex. 7-19a Béla Bartók, Quartet no. 4, V, m. 1

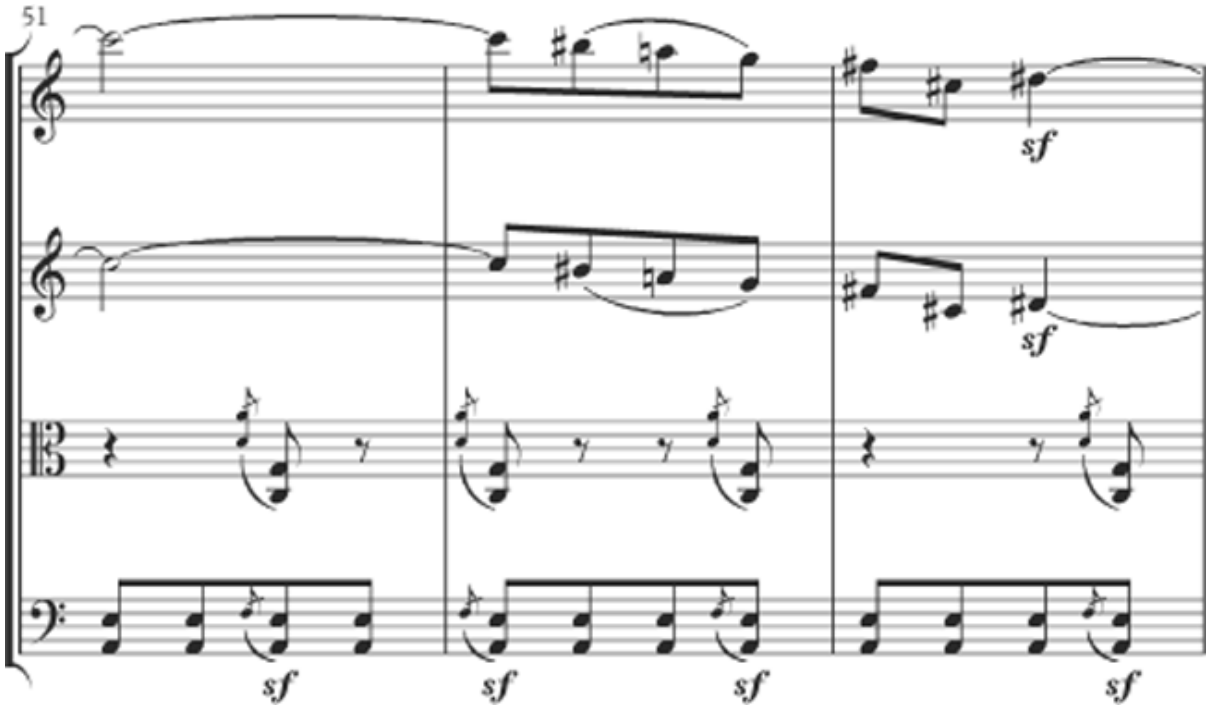


ex. 7-19b Béla Bartók, Quartet no. 4, V, m. 11

But let us return to Ex. 7-19a and take note of the two “foreign” pitches, F♯ and D♮. They are the equivalent of the F♯/C♯ just described, but their unusual spelling on their first appearance alerts us that something unusual yet strangely familiar may be afoot. A sharped note tends upward, a flatted one downward; so again we may have a case of neighbors scraping, as it were, the insides of an interval. This assumption is confirmed in a long passage beginning in m. 11 (Ex. 7-19b), in which the cello adds both neighbors simultaneously (the note-spelling now looking especially bizarre) to the viola’s normative fifth in the same register.


31
IV
ff marc.
f sf
sf
ff
ff marc.
35
marc.
sf
marc.


39
43
47

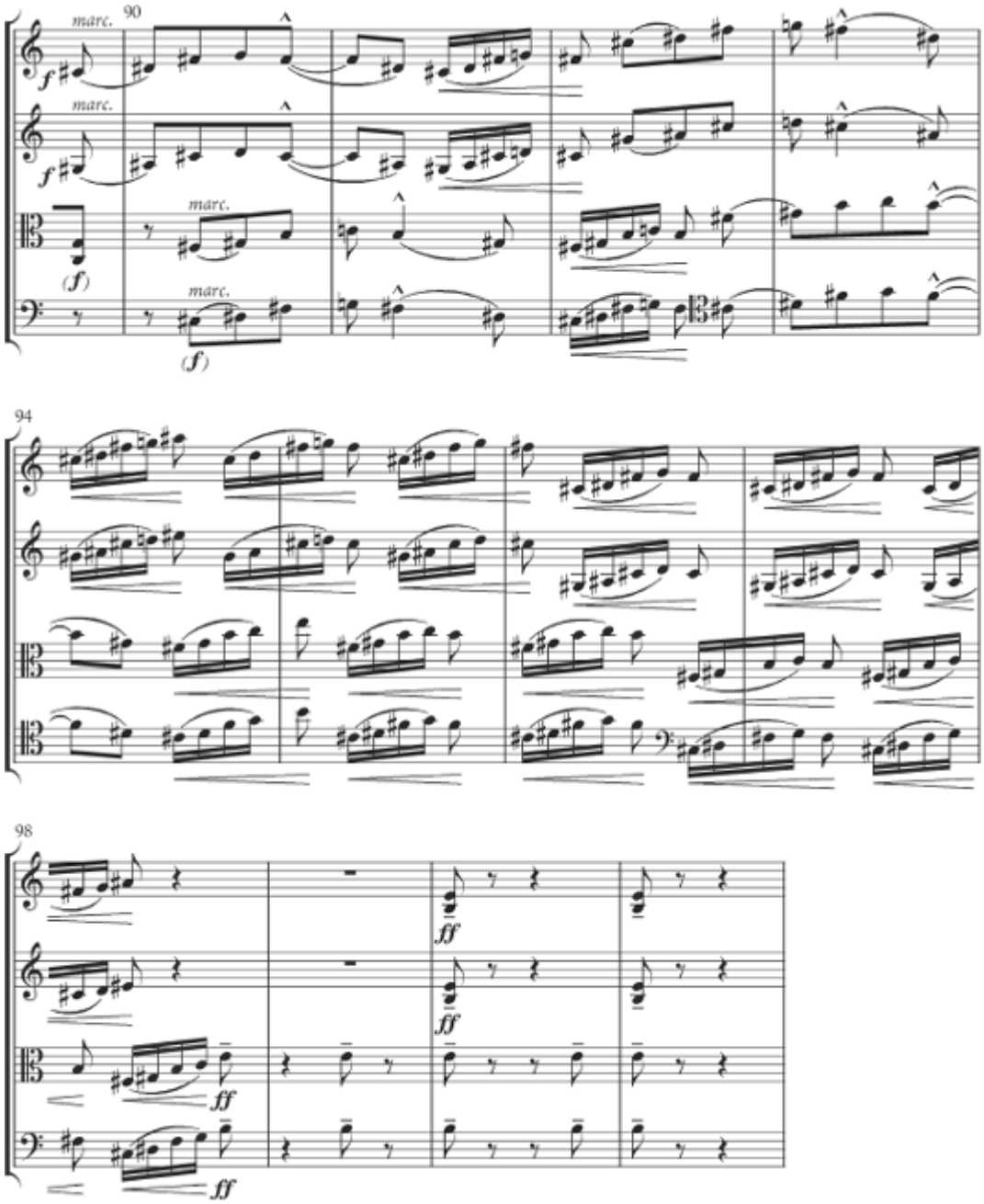


ex. 7-19c Béla Bartók, Quartet no. 4, V, mm. 31–53

In Ex. 7-19c, moreover, which begins at m. 31, the neighbor harmony is transferred to the inner voices, while the outer ones play a theme that consists of the fifth and its neighbors strung out as a sort of arpeggio (identified, when sighted in the Bagatelles, as the "Z-tetrachord,"), in which semitones alternate with fourths (or, as Bartók sometimes insists in his spelling, with augmented thirds). In m. 37 another variant appears, in which the lower G is replaced by a G♯ and the tune approaches a "Hungarian" pentatonic mode. At the pickup to m. 48 yet another variant appears, this time accompanying the normative fifth (now weirdly spelled with a B♯) and the neighbor tones (spelled with an ordinary C♯ in place of the weird D≠). The changed spellings suggest a reversal of the perspective. Now it is the original normative interval, spelled as the augmented third G/B♯, that is playing the role of double neighbor to a newly normative F♯/C♯.

So C(B♯)/G and F♯/C♯(D≠) are in a kind of harmonic stalemate. That much, as the reference to *Petrushka* reminds us, is nothing new. We've seen it before in Ravel, too, and it even arises occasionally in the work of Rimsky-Korsakov, since it arises "naturally" out of octatonic relationships based on the /0 3 6 9/ circle of minor thirds. (When C/G is at "0," F♯/C♯ will be at "6".) Indeed, Bartók confirms this common heritage at m. 44, when A and E (at "9") take over briefly as the normative fifth, providing a halfway house between C/G and F♯/C♯. Indeed, almost the entire pitch content of the first section of the movement can be referred to the same octatonic scale that provided the basic tonality in the second tableau of *Petrushka*—namely, the one that can be constructed out of triads on C, E≠, F♯, and A, and that can be represented in numbers (with C as "zero") as /0 1 3 4 6 7 9 10/.

Of the "missing" pitches /2 5 8 11/ (=D, F, G♯A≠, B), only the G♯A≠ figures prominently in the music we are surveying, first as a complementary neighbor to G in Ex. 7-19b, and later, in a single melodic appearance (m. 38), as the result of a transposition. The rest appear before m. 90 only as embellishments to the accompanying ostinato rhythm: the F in the cello as a neighbor to E at m. 44; the D only as part of a folk-primitivistic slashing-the-open-strings effect in the viola (also at m. 44). The B never appears at all, which makes its sudden prominence, beginning in the viola part at m. 90, such an event (Ex. 7-19d). Marking a sudden modulation, just as in traditional "tonal" music, it serves to articulate an important formal division.



ex. 7-19d Béla Bartók, Quartet no. 4, V mm. 90–101

But something else is happening as well. The superimposed fifths (or "Z-tetrachord") C/G + C♯D≠/F♯, whether appearing as an ostinato harmony or as a melodic phrase, are "overdetermined" in this music. It is a subset of the octatonic scale, as it would be in Stravinsky or Ravel, but the alternating use of each constituent fifth as a neighbor scraping the insides of its counterpart recalls the thoroughgoing symmetrical arrays that are uniquely Bartok's. If we were to continue the pattern implied by the progression from C/G to D≠/F♯ (that is, adding a semitone to the bottom and subtracting one from the top), the next interval to appear would be D/F, followed by D♯/E, an axis pair.

But we've been there before: it is all laid out in Ex. 7-15, our "representative 'odd' array" expressing "sum 7." Notice now how our two "Z-related" fifths function within the array: as "contiguities," or immediate successions on either side of the reciprocal axis—first "forward," so to speak, with C/G before D≠/F♯, then "backward." Another way of expressing the relationship would be to note that they exchange places on opposite sides of the reciprocal axis. The C/G and D≠/F♯ are in second place (±2) following each axis pair

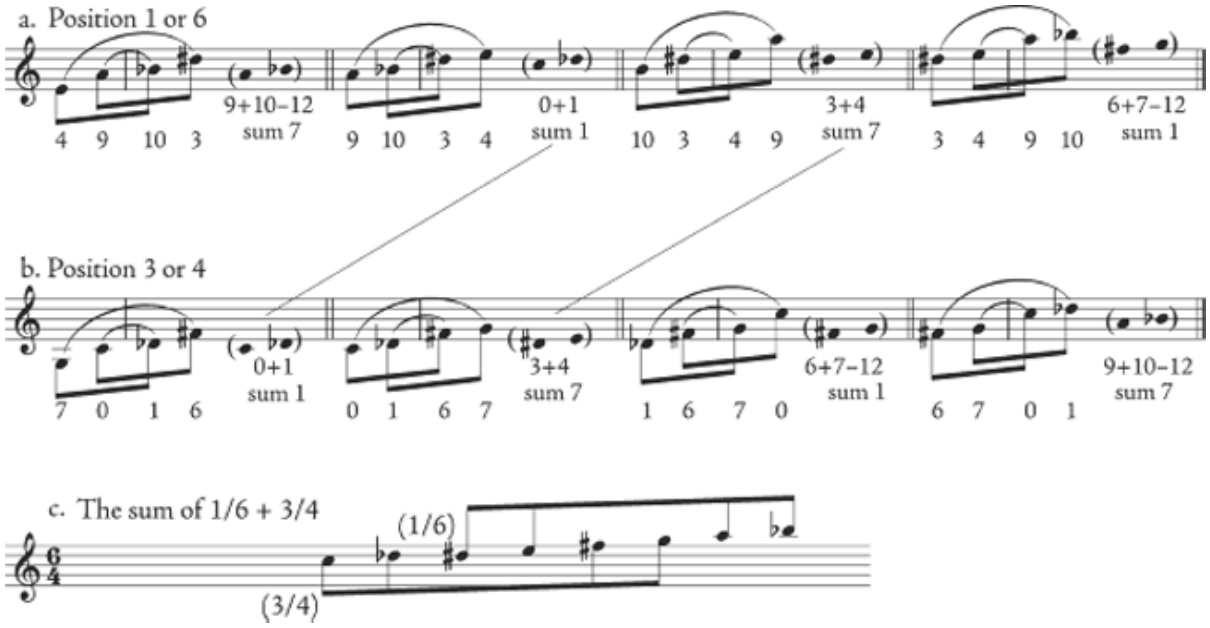
respectively, and the D≠/F♯ and C/G are in third place (±3).

There is yet a third way of viewing their relationship. Turn back to p.393 and look at Ex. 7-15c, which has not been discussed or even mentioned up to now. It simply shows the two halves of Ex. 7-15a superimposed. The familiar Z-tetrachord now comes as a discrete harmony in positions 3 and 4 (its two forms being related, so to speak, by inversion: two fourths superimposed at the tritone vs. two fifths). But the same harmony also comes at the ends, as the sum of the two axis pairs (again expressed in inversion: two semitones superimposed at the tritone vs. two major sevenths). The remaining harmony, at positions 2 and 5, is a diminished seventh chord that sums up the /0 3 6 9/ symmetry associated with the octatonic scale. For a final demonstration of the "overdetermination" of Bartókian symmetry, note that the Z-tetrachords at positions 1 + 3 (or 4 + 6, their inversions) sum up the contents of the octatonic scale laid out a few paragraphs above, and the chord at positions 2 and 4 is the complementary collection of "missing" pitches.

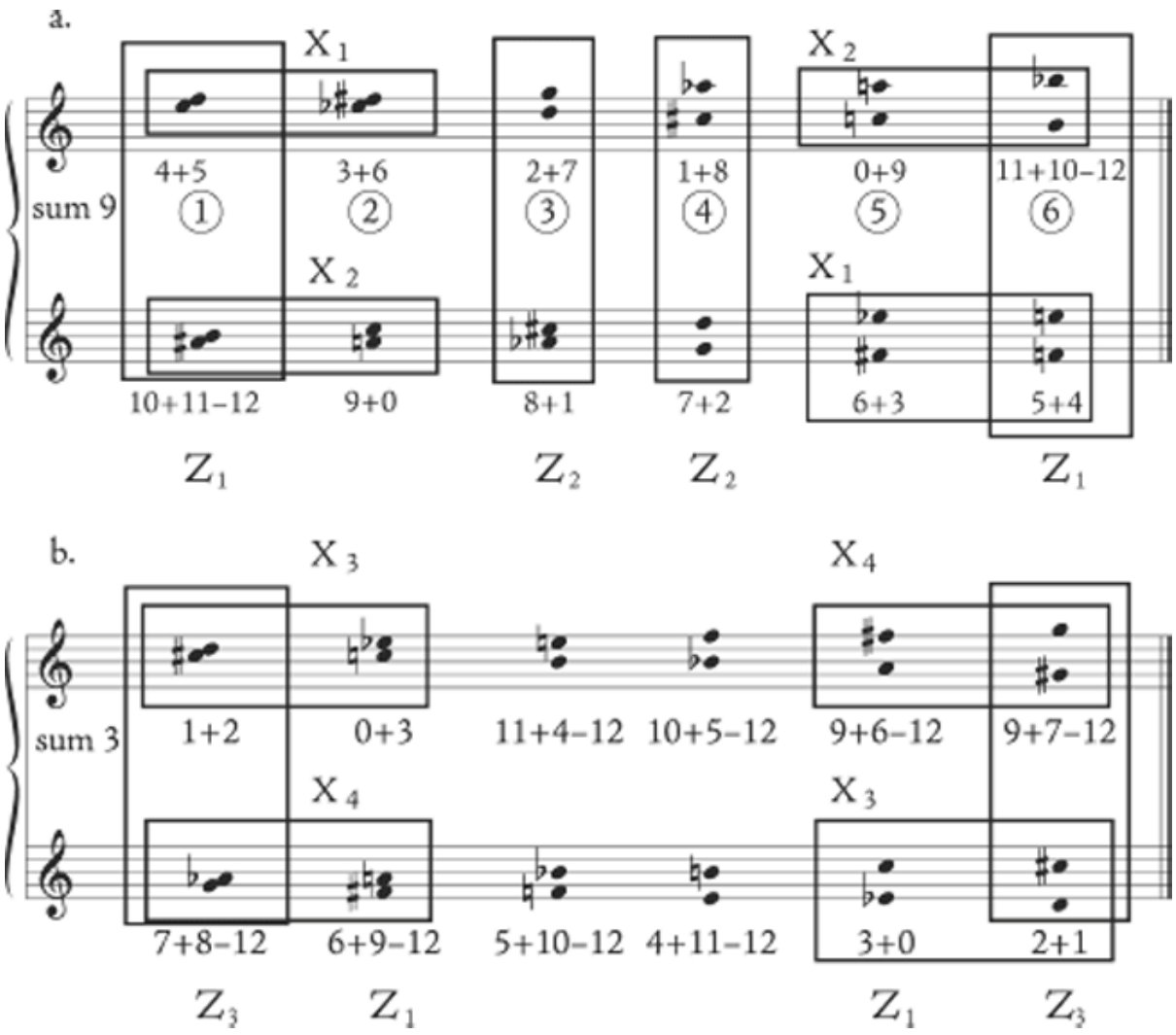
From this we may draw one final "theoretical" conclusion (or rather, make one more a priori generalization) before going back to the music. Just as two different Z-tetrachords appear in Ex. 7-15c, a summary of the harmonic relations of a single "odd" (or dual-axis) symmetrical array, so any one Z-tetrachord will appear in two such arrays. And just as the two Z-tetrachords within a single array stand at the distance of a minor third (easiest to see in Ex. 7-15c if position 1 is compared with position 4, or 3 with 6), so the two arrays between which a single Z-tetrachord can function as a pivot or bridge will have "sum" numbers that differ by 6 (representing the tritone).

Thus, in Ex. 7-20 (following a demonstration first published by the Bartók scholar Elliott Antokoletz[15]), each of the Z-tetrachords in Ex. 7-15c is written out four times, in permutations that show how it may be laid out around four different dual axes of symmetry, each located at a distance of a minor third from its neighbors. The index or "sum" number of each axis semitone is entered so as to confirm the observations made in the previous paragraph, which link Bartók's symmetrical scheme with the transposition routines already associated with "octatonicism" in the works of Stravinsky, Ravel, and Rimsky-Korsakov, and, behind them all, Bartók's revered compatriot Franz Liszt. An even simpler demonstration of that association is the bare fact that the sum of the two Z-tetrachords in question, or any two found in the same symmetrical array, is the octatonic scale itself (see Ex. 7-20c).

But now it is time, once and for all, to ask why they are called "Z" tetrachords. The answer to that question, along with a peek at Bartók's maximalism at its far out point, will emerge from a brief but comprehensive stab at analyzing the first movement of the Fourth Quartet. The very first measure (see Ex. 7-22) contains the telltale clue (as if we needed one by now) that the movement is based on a symmetrical array. A glance at the two violin parts, moving out from a semitone or "compound semitone" (minor ninth) to an augmented second, tell us that, and also specify the semitone E/F as one of the axes. Ex. 7-21a shows the whole array, set out in two tiers like Ex. 7-15c.

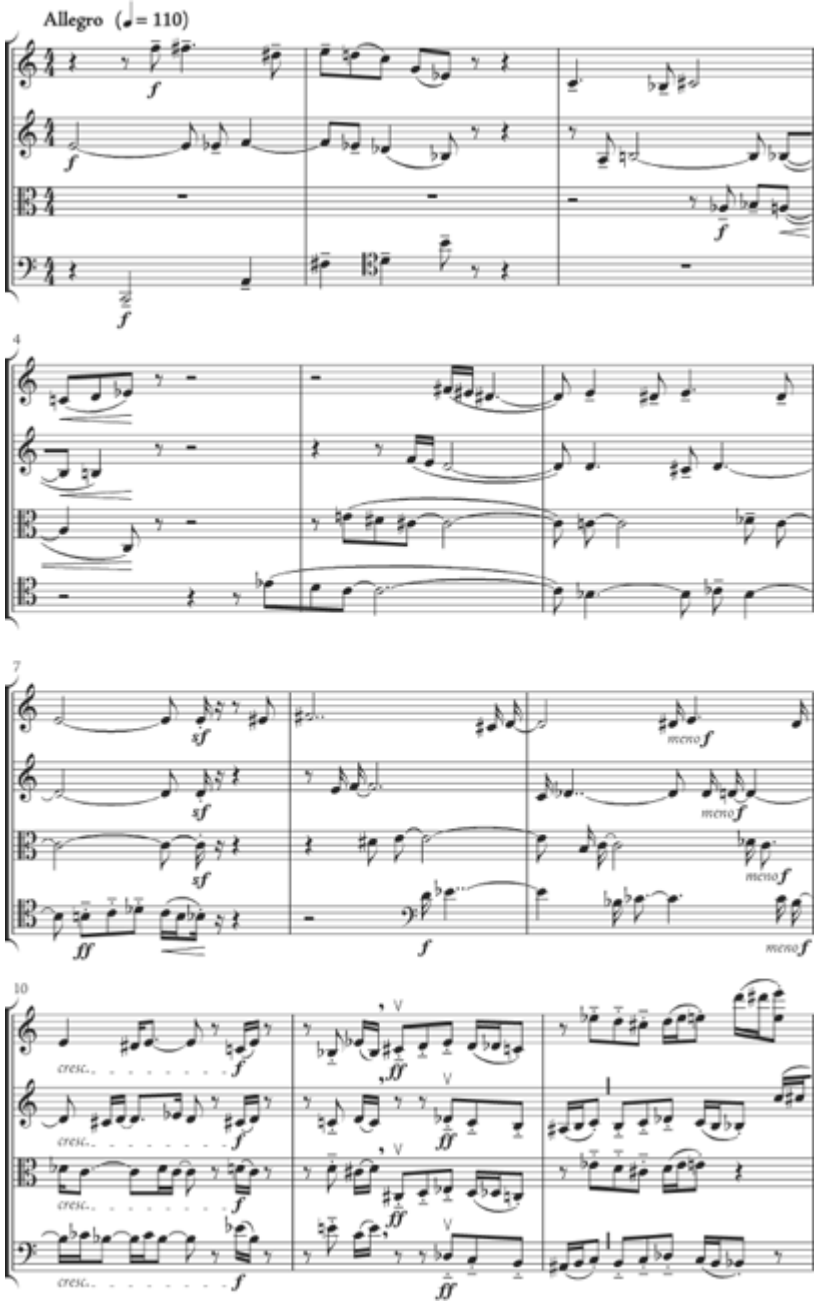


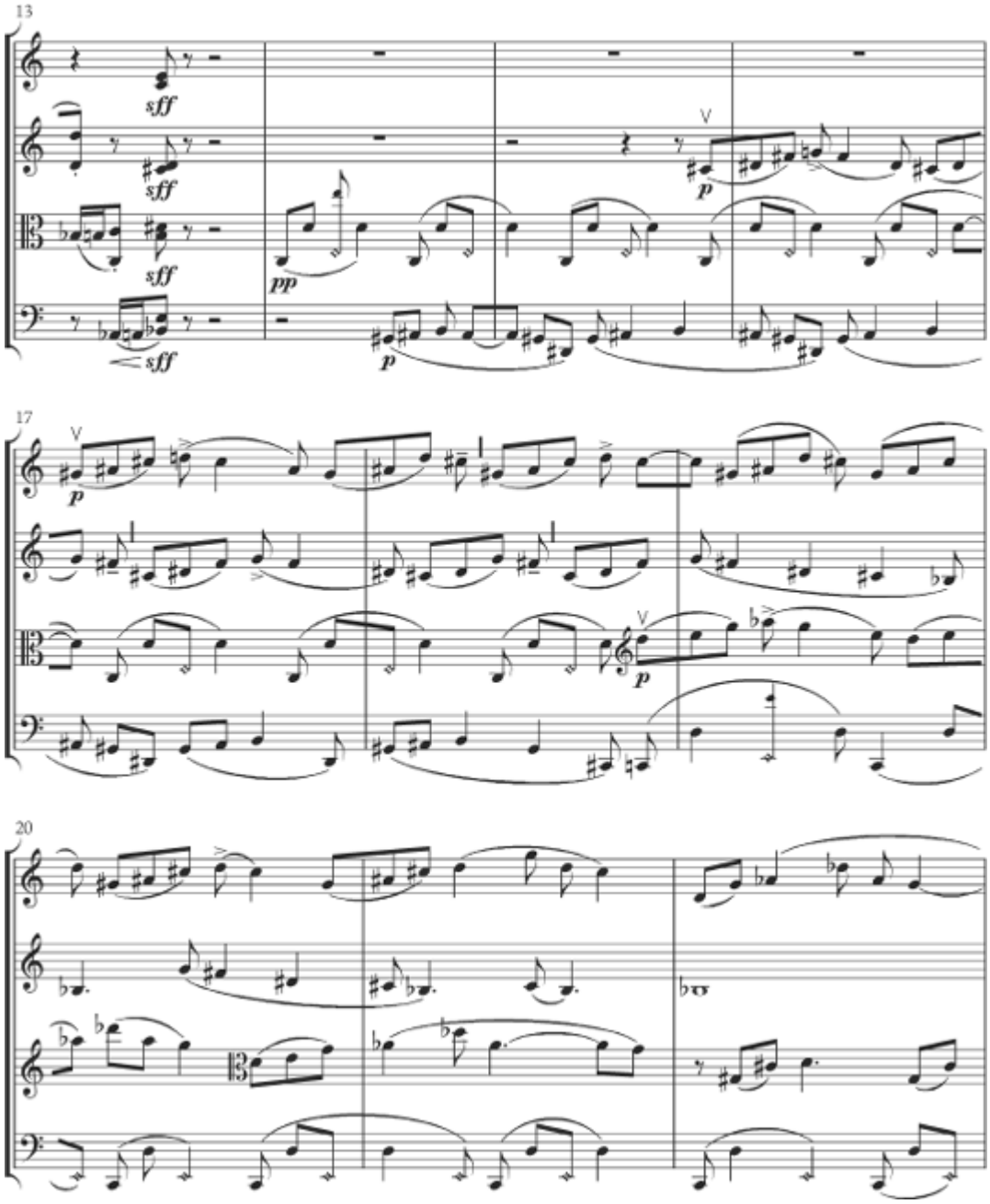
ex. 7-20 Permutations of the Z-tetrachord



ex. 7-21 Symmetrical arrays for Béla Bartók, Quartet no. 4, I

The first phrase in Ex. 7-22 (mm. 1–2) is constructed almost entirely out of the intervallic relationships presented in Ex. 7-21a. Besides the semitone E/F and the augmented second E≠/F♯ in the violins (positions 1 and 2 in the top staff of the array), there is the sixth C/A in the cello (position 5) and the concluding simultaneity B/B≠ in the second violin and cello (position 6). Position 3 (the fourth G/D) also comes as a simultaneity in m. 2 (cello and first violin). The second phrase (mm. 3–4) replays it all on the lower staff of Ex. 7-21a, beginning with the two violins on A/C (position 2) and B/B≠ (position 1), and then the viola entry on A≠ against the first fiddle's C♯. The viola then proceeds to A/C (position 2) expressed as a sixth, to mirror the cello's sixth in m. 1.





ex. 7-22 Béla Bartók, Quartet no. 4, I, mm. 1–22

At the pickup to the fifth measure, the cello repeats the last three notes played by the first violin, but in typically reversed order, asserting a "horizontal" axis of symmetry to go with the vertical ones we have been investigating. Its descending third is then imitated by the other three instruments, each entering a semitone above the last and holding the final note so that a maximally dissonant cluster, which sets the tense or angrily agitated tone that will persist throughout the movement, is built up and tied over the bar.

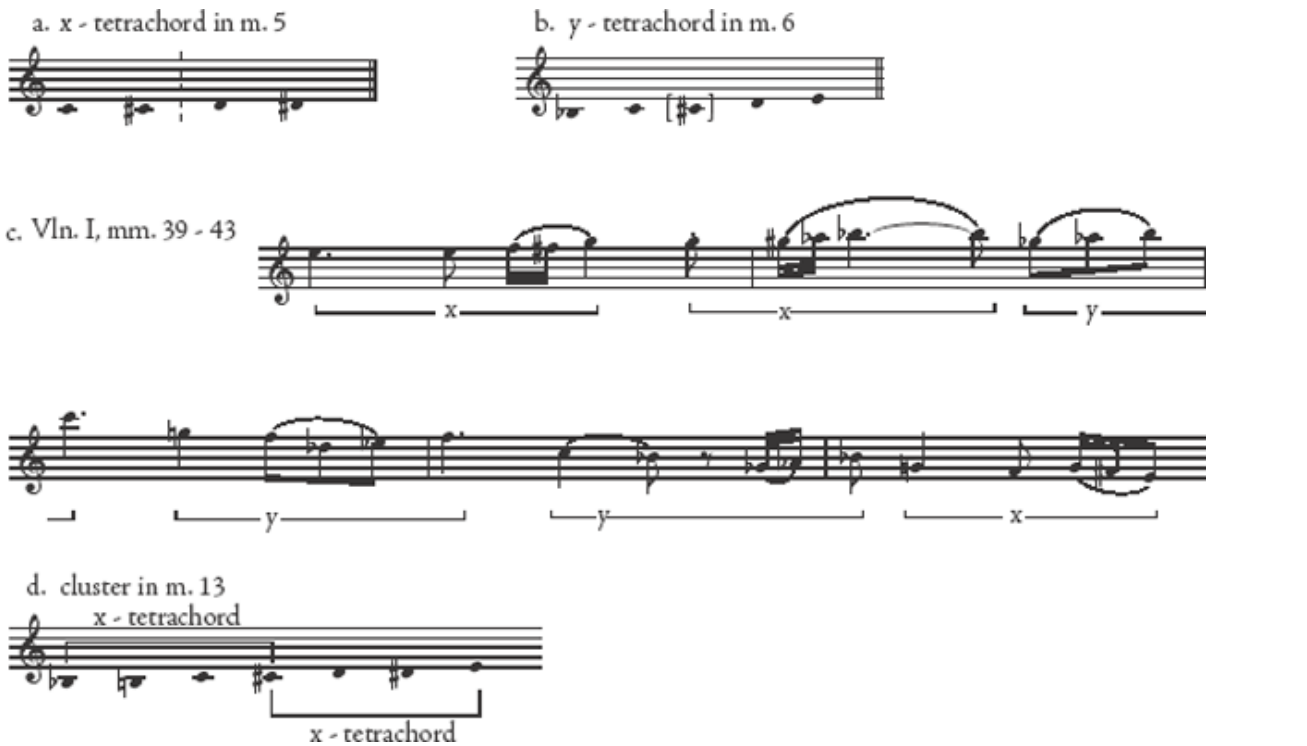
That cluster, however, is no "mere" cluster. It is one of the most important motives in the movement, so important that it was christened "X" or "the X set" by George Perle in a very influential article, "Symmetrical Formations in the String Quartets of Béla Bartók," published in 1955.[16] That article, one of the first to unlock the secrets of Bartók's symmetrical arrays, made the X-set famous along with its counterpart the Y-set, which follows immediately on the second eighth of m. 6. As the "X-set" was a four-note cluster encompassing three semitones, so the "Y-set" was an equally elemental particle, a cluster of three whole tones. Since both sets contained four notes, they are now more commonly known as the X and Y tetrachords.

Both, obviously, are intervallically (hence inversionally) symmetrical. The middle semitone of the X-tetrachord is its dual axis of symmetry; the whole-tone cluster has an unplayed single axis between its middle pair of notes. Thus, as Ex. 7-23 shows, the axis of symmetry for the first X-tetrachord in the quartet (m. 5) is C♯/D, while the axis for the first Y-tetrachord (m. 6) is C♯D≠. And as the cello part in m. 7 shows, the characteristic motif whose progress from chromatic to diatonic is in effect the story of the quartet, originates as a rhythmicized "horizontalization" of the X-tetrachord, initially played for maximum dissonance against an accompanying Y-tetrachord. But the Y-tetrachord is just as frequently "horizontalized." Many of the longer melodic phrases in the movement can be parsed into alternating X's and Y's (see Ex. 7-23c).

The passage in mm. 7–11 of Ex. 7–22 pits the two symmetrical hexachords one against the other with increasing speed, while in mm. 11–12 the quartet pairs off into two duos at the octave, demonstrating the symmetry of the X-tetrachord by playing it against its inversion from a common starting point at C♯D≠, the axis of the Y-tetrachord. But of course these inversionally equivalent motives are also palindromic, having a pitch succession that is the same reading front to back or back to front. Just as in Schoenberg's atonal utopia, in Bartók's symmetricalized musical space there is "no absolute up or down, right or left." Bartók, too, has "emancipated the dissonance," and with similar effect. But his musical utopia is not "pantonal." There are definite normative harmonies, which can be departed from, returned to, progressed between, and embellished; and so, despite everything, a sense of pitch hierarchy is maintained.

And there is a sense of closure at m. 13, brought about in a way that recalls the ending of Schoenberg's *Erwartung*: a cluster covering the tritone B≠–E, which amounts to two conjunct X-tetrachords interlocking on their common point of origin, C♯D≠, and filling in the space of the original Y-tetrachord (see Ex. 7-23d). That space is exactly half of the total available musical space, leaving the other half in reserve for "complementation," thus allowing for further harmonic movement.

The air having been cleared by the cluster chord and the following two-beat rest, the music at m. 14 has the effect of a new theme. It is none other than what we have already encountered as the main theme of the last movement, the one that, together with its transpositions, exhausts an octatonic scale. So it does here. Note well the outer limits of the theme at its two transpositions: in the second violin, beginning at the pickup to m. 16, the limits are defined as the tritone C♯/G; in the first violin, beginning at m. 17, the limits are the tritone G♯/D.

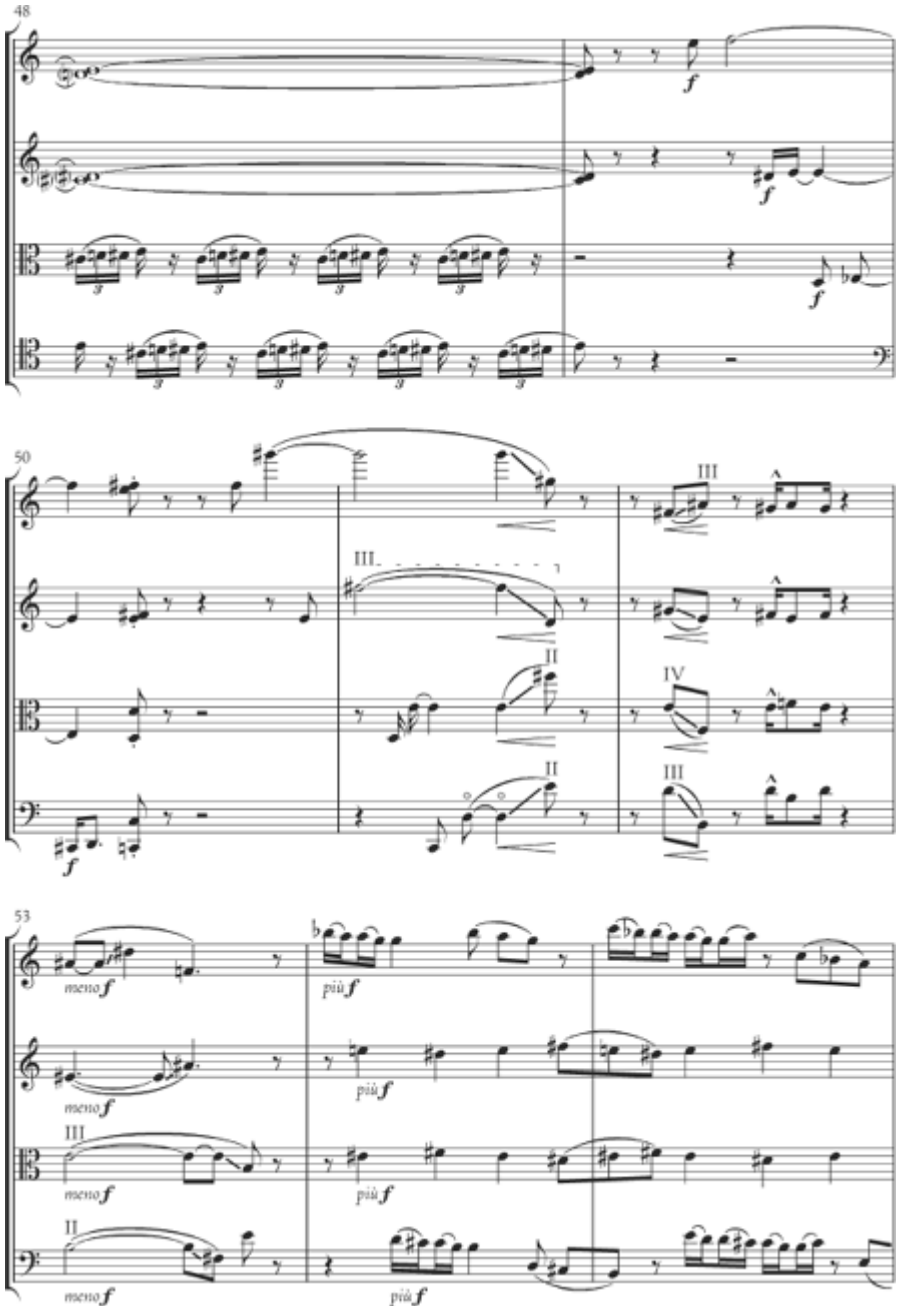


ex. 7-23 X- and Y-tetrachords

The same limits are described "inside out" (i.e., D/A≠) by the viola, beginning at the pickup to m. 19. On repetition, the viola connects the A≠ to a high D≠ that comes down via a G, thus combining in one line the two tritones expressed by the two violin parts. The first violin takes a cue from this at mm. 20–21, with a line that turns the viola's tritones inside out again, combining the tritone G♯/D going up with the tritone G/C♯ coming down. In m. 22, the first violin plays a variant that is entirely confined to the two tritones (compare mm. 31–34 in Ex. 7-19c from the last movement).

But this configuration, of course, is none other than our "Z-tetrachord," and now we have an inkling into the origin of the term. It was coined by Leo Treitler, an eminent music historian who was then a graduate student in composition at Princeton University, in an article of 1959, "Harmonic Procedure in the *Fourth Quartet* of Bela Bartók."[17] Treitler demonstrated the functional equivalence of this harmony, which (as we have already noted) is inversionally symmetrical at multiple axes, with the "X" and "Y" tetrachords already named by Perle. This cumulative process of discovery, in which the work of various scholars contributed toward the elucidation of Bartók's symmetrical arrays and the tonal system to which they gave rise, was one of the notable detective stories of twentieth-century musicology.

Once discovered as a discrete harmony, the Z-tetrachord revealed fascinating properties. As a look back at Ex. 7-21 will confirm, the Z-tetrachord that Bartók gradually introduces over the span of mm. 18–22 in the first movement of the quartet is deeply embedded in the structure of the "sum 9" array, where it is labeled "Z_2." It is the sum of the intervals in positions 3 and 4, whether one reads the top staff, the bottom staff, or the two staves as a simultaneity. It is, in effect, the inversional-cum-palindromic fulcrum or balance-point of the array. And the X-tetrachord is just as deeply embedded in the array: it is the sum of the intervals in positions 1 and 2, as well as positions 5 and 6 in any one staff. And the content of the tetrachord as it is first displayed as a harmony (m. 5) corresponds exactly to the intervals in positions 1 and 2 on the upper staff of the "sum 3" array (Ex. 7-21b).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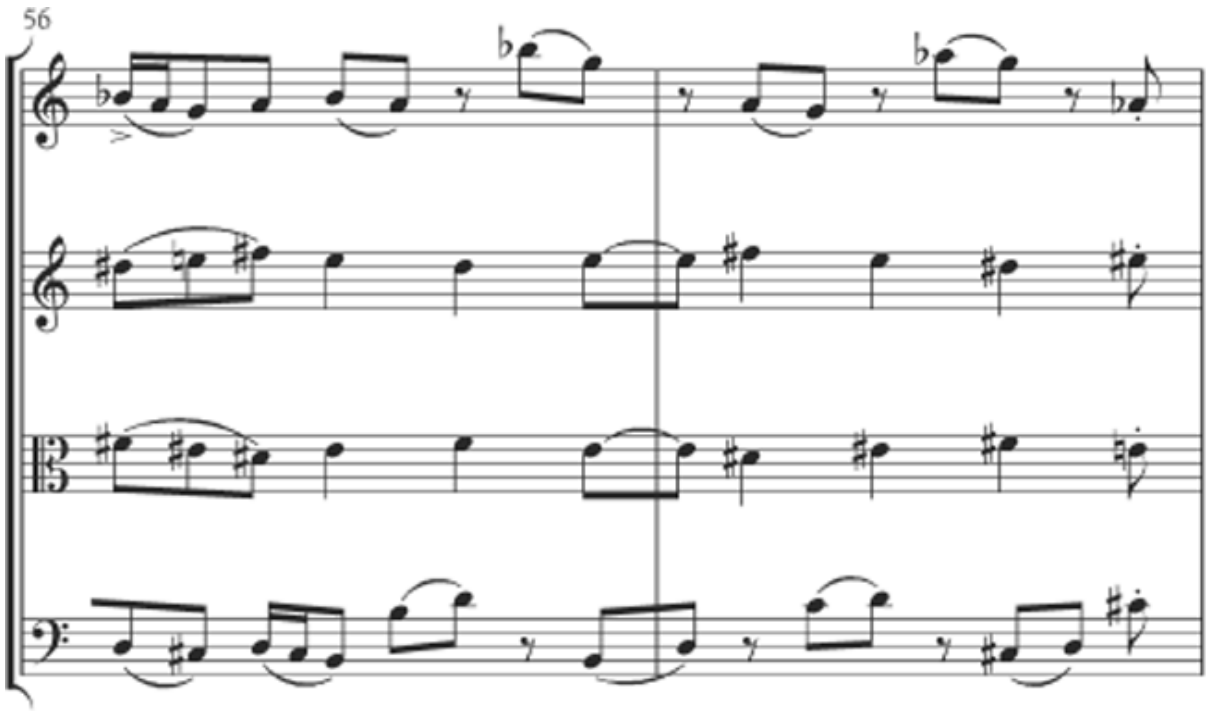
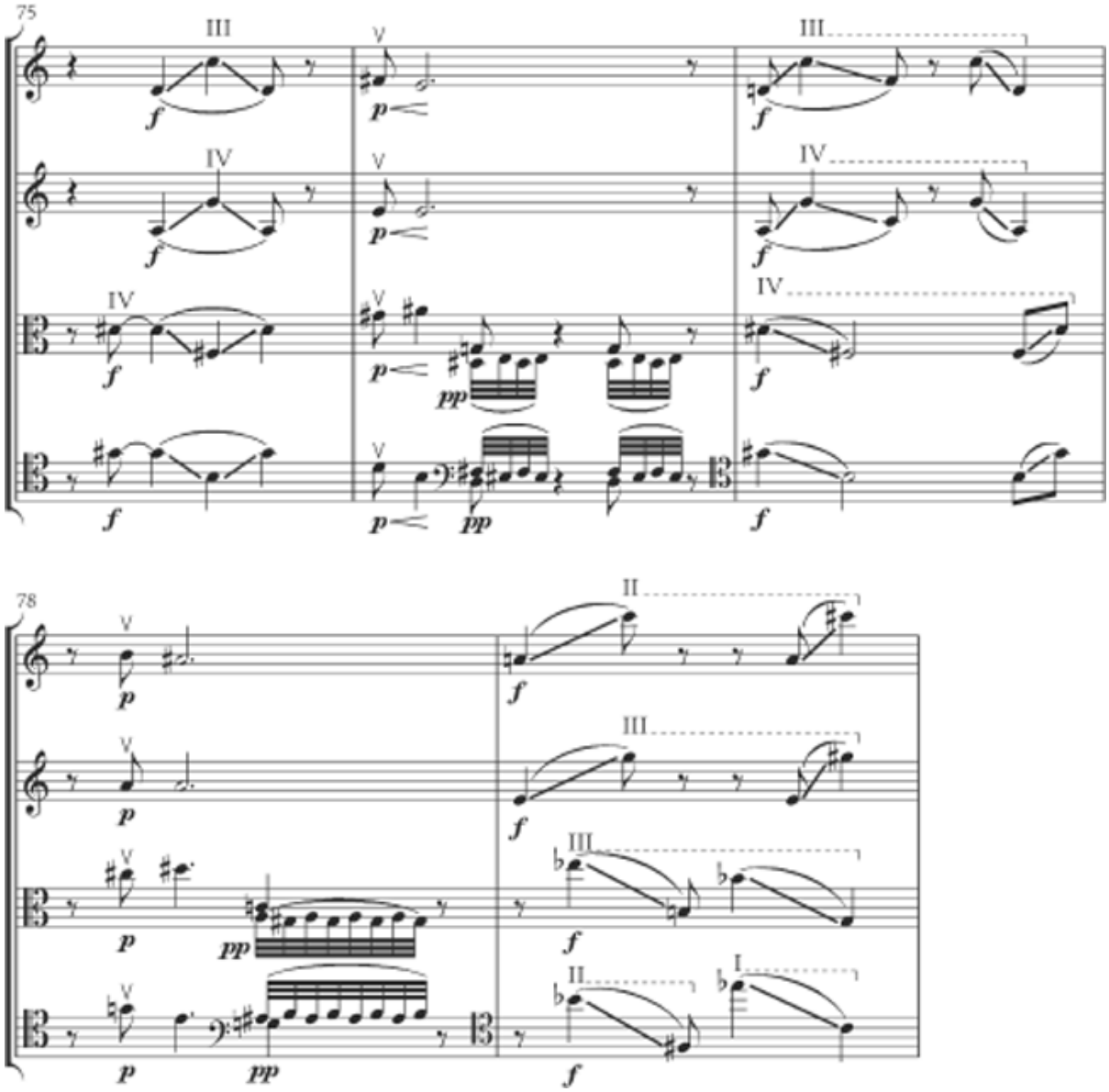
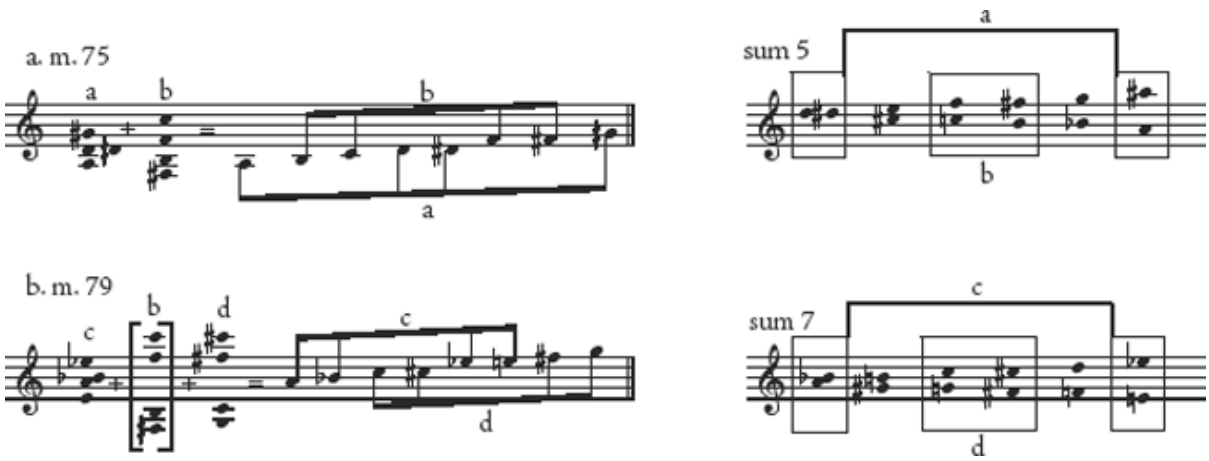


ex. 7-24a Béla Bartók, Quartet no. 4, I, mm. 48–57



ex. 7-24b Béla Bartók, Quartet no. 4, I, mm. 75–82

Now that we know the story of the tetrachords' christening, and are armed accordingly with some insight into their shared properties, we can appreciate what happens in the long passage beginning in m. 48 (Ex. 7-24a), characterized by dogged sequences of mirror writing and by one of the most widely imitated aspects of Bartók's maximalistic quartet manner: grinding glissandos in contrary motion. The latter take over in m. 75 and drive the movement to a peak of harmonic tension. Every harmony from m. 75 to m. 93 (see Ex. 7-24b for its beginning) consists of one of the three symmetrical tetrachords. As Treitler noted in his article of 1959 (building on an observation that Perle had published four years previously), "the z-group is related to the y as the latter is to the x; i.e., the y expands to the z [as the x expands cadentially to the y]." But when Z proceeds to Z, the relationship can be described as "octatonic complementation": the two will always be found in complementary positions in a symmetrical array, their sum being an octatonic scale (see Ex. 7-25, an analytical reduction of Ex. 7-24b).



ex. 7-25 Béla Bartok, Quartet no. 4, I, octatonic complementation ("Z to Z progressions") in mm. 75–82

Beginning at m. 83, the "horizontalized" version of the X-tetrachord begins insinuating itself into the chordal texture, leading to a conspicuous reprise ten bars later of the movement's opening phrases, juxtaposed with horizontalized X-tetrachords and mirror glissandos of even greater compass than before (Ex. 7-26). One recognizes in this section the return of many of the opening gestures, including the modified reintroduction of the Z-tetrachord. (See Ex. 7-27 for an illustration of the process, in which some extra notes are interpolated that can be referred equally to the octatonic or to the "folk" pentatonic scale.) It is surely no accident that the Z-tetrachord in violin II now corresponds to the sum of the axes in Ex. 7-21b.

Notes:

(14) László Somfai, *The New Grove Modern Masters* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 62.

(15) Elliott Antokoletz, "Principles of Pitch Organization in Bartók's Fourth String Quartet," in *Theory Only* III, no. 4 (September 1977): 4.

(16) George Perle, "Symmetrical Formations in the String Quartets of Béla Bartók," *The Music Review* XVI (1955): 309ff.

(17) Leo Treitler, "Harmonic Procedure in the *Fourth Quartet* of Béla Bartók," *Journal of Music Theory* III (1959): 292–97.

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Béla Bartók

RETREAT?

Chapter: CHAPTER 7 Social Validation
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
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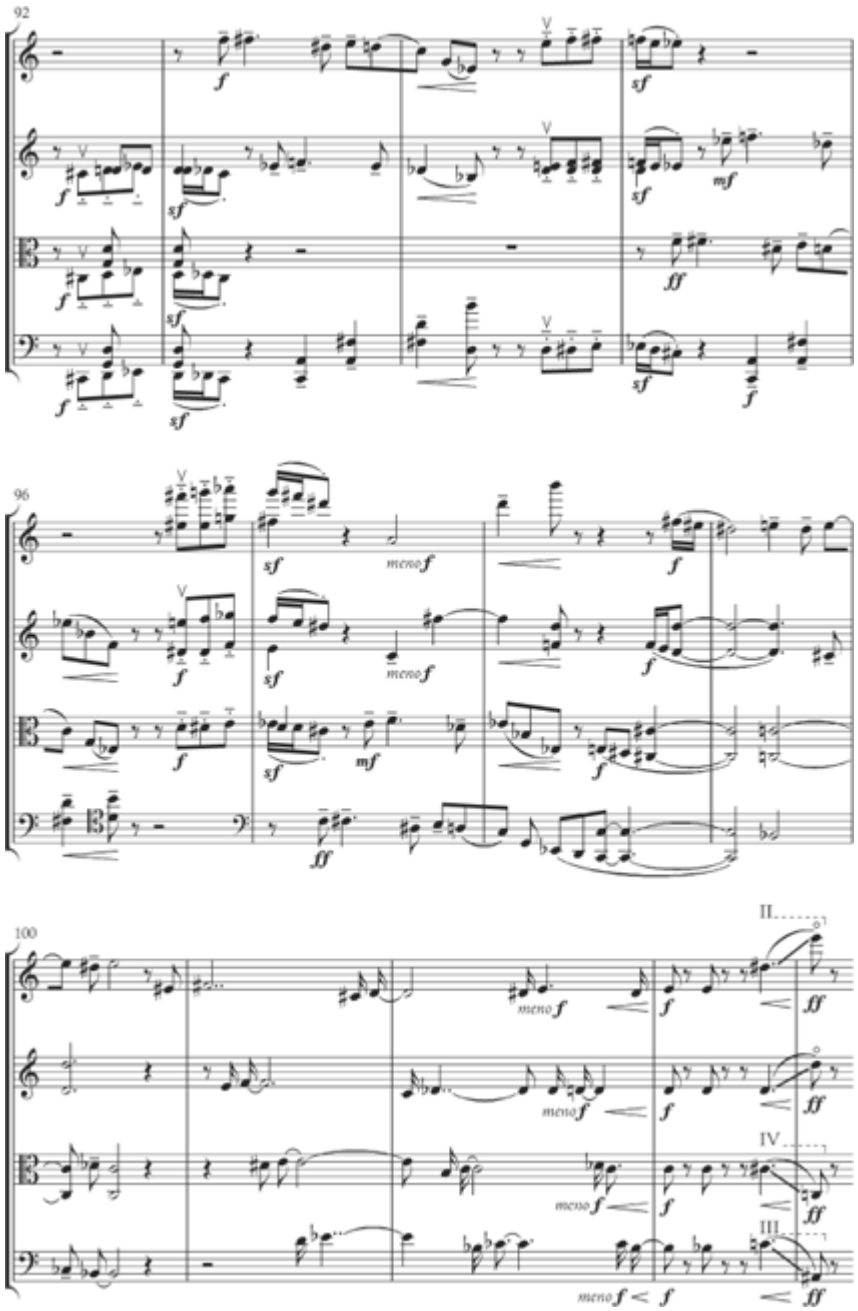
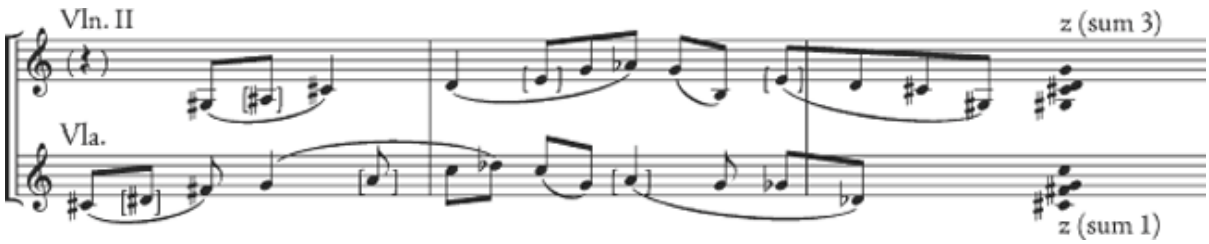


ex. 7-26 Béla Bartók, Quartet no. 4, I, mm. 93–104



ex. 7-27 Béla Bartók, Quartet no. 4, I, re-introduction of Z-tetrachords after reprise (mm. 112–114)

The movement, in fine, breaks down into a four-part scheme: mm. 1–49, mm. 50–93, mm. 93–126, mm. 126–160. All of the observations we have been making–the "bithematic" structure of the first section; its thematic correspondences with the third; the seeming dissection of the music into its elementary particles in the second; the integration of elements from the second section within the otherwise "recapitulatory" third; the significantly modified tonal scheme of the third; to which we may now add the quickened tempo and percussive address of the last—conspire to produce an impression of a symmetrically reinterpreted "sonata form" as the composers of the nineteenth century had inherited it from Beethoven, replete with exposition, development, recapitulation, and coda.

That format does not correspond exactly to any modern historian's description of sonata form. Such a description, based on a historical investigation of its origins and genealogy in the eighteenth century, must emphasize the sonata's descent from the earlier binary form (which means interpreting it chiefly in harmonic or "tonal" terms). But the conservatory textbooks of the nineteenth century interpreted the form, based chiefly on its thematic content, as "ternary" or "ternary plus coda." This was the model Bartók inherited, learned, and adapted.

All of this raises some important and interesting historical questions—or are they merely "historiographical" ones? In keeping with the "modernist" spirit as defined in chapter 1, a spirit that unquestionably drove much of the musical thought of the early twentieth century, our discussion of Bartók has emphasized his most maximalistic devices, and these at their peak period of concentration. This peak period, it has probably been noticed already, came significantly later with Bartók than it had with Schoenberg, who was an older composer than Bartók, or with Stravinsky, who was his almost exact contemporary. And that partially explains the curious fact that Bartók's most maximalistic phase simultaneously entailed a reaffirmation of fidelity to "timeless" musical standards, as exemplified by the fugue and the sonata, genres that the early twentieth-century maximalists since Mahler had made a point of ignoring. (And even Mahler had made a point of modifying his deployment of sonata form in accordance with the post-Wagnerian precept that "content must create its own form.").

As we are about to discover, the turn back toward the timeless or the "classic" was perhaps the dominant esthetic swerve of the so-called "interwar" decades, the 1920s and 1930s, a period in the history of twentieth-century music that is often christened "neoclassical." To a certain extent it was characterized by its protagonists (and to a much larger extent by their critics or detractors) as a retreat or even a regression: a pullback from the brink or abyss—or, from the detractors' point of view, from responsibility to one's historical obligation.

One would hesitate to apply such a term to so aggressively, even recalcitrantly discordant a work as the first movement of Bartók's Fourth Quartet, let alone a work so intricately realized on premises so novel as to require the combined efforts of a generation of scholars to crack its code. It hardly seems to be shrinking back from anything. And if it evokes a form that textbooks purvey as a sort of exemplary musical behavior, it does so in a way that implicitly challenges the form to embrace a novel, almost feral dynamism. One would be hard put to deny its composer's commitment to the technical advancement of his art, even at the risk of its comprehensibility to a nonprofessional audience.

And yet if we compare the Fourth Quartet of 1928 with the *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta* of

1936, we might be tempted to question that commitment after all. And as we shall see later, were we to compare the works Bartók composed in America during his last five years of life with those of his maximalistic peak, we might be even more inclined to wonder at his creative path, if our model of composerly responsibility is founded on notions of progress and technical advancement.

Bartók, it seems, could not have believed in those "progressive" notions to compose the way he did in the last decade or so of his career—but in that case, how is one to explain his maximalistic phase? Is it fair to describe the move away from it as a retreat, or is that a necessarily (and therefore superfluously) prejudicial term? Can one move forward in time yet backward in "history"? These paradoxes and contradictions indeed became a crux—a problematical moment—in the history of twentieth-century music. The way in which historians, critics, and composers have dealt with it provides another example—actually, a whole heap of examples—of historiography's impact on history. From this point on, that crux and its impact will be one of our predominating themes.

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Jenufa

THE OLDEST TWENTIETH-CENTURY COMPOSER?

Chapter: CHAPTER 7 Social Validation
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Here is how Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno (1903–69), the musical philosopher whom we met in chapter 6 as an advocate of Schoenberg and his pupils, managed to "salvage for history" a composer he admired, but one whose music failed to keep up with the pace of Viennese innovation. Perhaps significantly, the composer in question, Leoš Janáček (1854–1928) was, like Bartók, a member of one of the outlying non-Germanic populations within the old empire of which Vienna was the center and capital. "Where the evolutionary direction of Western music failed to be realized fully," wrote Adorno,

> as in some of the rural regions of southeastern Europe, tonal material could be used, until quite recently, without shame. One thinks of the magnificent art of Janáček: all its folkloristic tendencies clearly must be counted part of the most progressive dimension of European art music. The legitimation of such music from the periphery is based ultimately on the fact that a coherent and selective technical canon emerges from it. Truly exotic music, the material of which, even though it is familiar, is organized in a totally different way from that of the West, has a power of alienation which places it in the company of the avant-garde and not that of nationalistic reaction.[18]

Although Adorno was arguing from a position that he identified as "progressive," it is painfully easy now to perceive the smug ethnocentric bias that informs it—and it becomes even easier if we switch the terms around. What is permitted to Janáček (or Bartók, whose music is discussed nearby) would be thought unworthy of a German, Adorno implies, for the task of German music is to represent "the West" (and even "humanity") in general terms. Moreover, the authenticity of Janáček's "magnificent art," which Adorno quite wrongly assumed to have been the product of a rural or agrarian society, is measured entirely in terms of its appeal to urban Germans, for whom it is exotic (and therefore "alienated"), rather than in terms of its appeal to the composer's compatriots, the group to whom it was actually directed in the first place, the educated and urban strata of Czech society. Germany, or rather the German-speaking urban centers with their emotionally self-absorbed upper-middle class, remained for Adorno the measure of all things. That in itself was evidence of its (and his) emotional self-absorption.

Meanwhile, the very definition of alienation—the loss or renunciation of fellow-feeling in the wake of emotional stress or social injustice—proclaims its irrelevance to artists like Janáček, the object of Adorno's ostensible praise, who saw right through it. "Not everyone understands a fellow man," Janáček told a London audience in 1926:

> Once an educated German said to me: "What, you grow out of folk song? That is a sign of a lack of culture!" As if a man on whom the sun shines, on whom the moon pours out its light, as if all that surrounds us was not a part of our culture. I turned away and let the German be.[19]

But of course this statement, too, must be unpacked. The man who made it was at the age of seventy-one just beginning to enjoy "world" celebrity after half a century of strictly regional (and not even "national") fame.

That is one of the reasons why Janáček had such a strangely shaped career, one that made him by a fairly wide margin the oldest composer who is customarily (and rightly) treated as a representative "twentieth-century" figure, alongside contemporaries young enough to be his children or even his grandchildren. He was older than Mahler or Richard Strauss, but his music is more often (and more tellingly) compared with that of Debussy, Stravinsky, or Bartók. Part of the reason for that was its determined anti-Germanism.

The attitude toward culture (and nature) with which Janáček countered the cosmopolitanism of "educated German" taste was (like Bartók's) akin to the relativistic attitudes first put forth by Herder, an educated German, a century and a half before to counter the cosmopolitan universalism of Enlightened France. But like everyone else who has figured in the last several chapters, Janáček participated in the suddenly quickened tempo of stylistic change that seized European composers around the turn of century. That made him a modernist. And he applied his radically renovated technique to an intensified or radicalized pursuit of traditionally accepted expressive tasks, which made him a maximalist. The remarkable difference was that he accomplished all of this at a singularly advanced age.

One of the major factors contributing to what may seem his retarded development was indeed the place of his birth, but not for the kind of reason that would typically occur to an "educated German" like Adorno. Janáček was a Moravian—a member, that is, of what was even within Czech-speaking society a slighted minority. Moravia, the central farming area of what became Czechoslovakia in 1918, is bounded on the west by the more urbanized Bohemia, and on the east by "Magyarized" Slovakia. (Since the division of 1993, Moravia has been the eastern portion of the Czech Republic.) Brno (called Brünn in German), Moravia's industrial center and its one large town, was under Austrian rule even more a Germanized city than Prague, the Bohemian (later the Czech) capital. It was officially a German-speaking city before 1918, and a predominantly German-speaking one even after, as long as Janáček was alive.

Janáček, born into the Czech-speaking family of a village schoolmaster, was sent for his education to a monastery in Brno, and after more advanced studies in Prague, Leipzig, and Vienna, he returned there and settled down to a lifelong career as music teacher and choral conductor in the Moravian capital. In 1881 he founded the Brno Organ School under the auspices of the Society for the Promotion of Church Music in Moravia, served as its director for thirty-eight years, and continued on the staff until his seventieth birthday. He was Brno's most prominent musician, but as of his sixtieth birthday, in 1914, he was almost completely unknown outside of that city. Even in neighboring Bohemia he was thought of as an insignificant provincial, a "hick." That is what retarded his career. The earliest work of Janáček's that is now a world repertory item, the opera *Její pastorkyňa* ("Her stepdaughter", known outside the Czech lands by the name of its title character, *Jenůfa*), composed between 1895 and 1903, could not get a hearing in Prague until 1916, twelve years after its Brno premiere, when the composer was sixty-two. When it finally did reach the Czech capital it made such a sensation that it was immediately picked up (in German translation) by the Vienna Opera, and made its way in short order as far as America, where it was staged (in 1924) by the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

Its chief appeal to early audiences was less its folkish exoticism (by then an old story) than its effectively shocking treatment of a violent plot, very much in the naturalistic spirit of the "verismo" operas of Mascagni and especially Puccini (Janáček's close contemporary). In act I a jealous lover slashes the title character's face; in act II her stepmother kills her illegitimate child. Act III contains the novel and emotionally potent turn that made the opera so successful: the crime is discovered, the stepmother condemned, but both she and the lover receive forgiveness from the title character, who marries the man, now sincerely contrite, who had slashed her, acting not in the spirit of martyrdom but in that of mature empathy and Christian reconciliation.

The opera, as a result, cannot easily be read as a social criticism (and might today merit some feminist criticism on its own account). Ultimately it did not threaten the traditionally patriarchal values of its audience, and it was further aided in its foreign conquests by the presence in the title role of a fashionable singer, Maria Jeritza (1887–1982), a great Vienna favorite who, as it happened, was a native of Brno. By 1924 she was "the Metropolitan's most glamorous and beautiful star"[20] (according to *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*), and Janáček's opera was staged there as her novelty vehicle. It did not immediately hold the stage

outside of Central Europe.

But its international success, however fleeting in the short run, stimulated its formerly pent-up composer into a frenzy of creativity. In the twelve years that remained to him after the Prague premiere of *Jenůfa*, Janáček wrote five more operas: *Výlet pana Broučka do XV. stoleti* (Mr. Brouček's Excursion to the 15th Century, 1917), a patriotic comedy after a fantasy novel by Svatopluk Čech, composed to greet the impending proclamation of independent Czechoslovakia; *Káťa Kabanová* (1921), another realistic tragedy after the classic play *The Storm* by the Russian dramatist Alexander Ostrovsky; *Příhody Lišky Bystroušky* ("The adventures of little foxy sharp-ears", usually translated "The cunning little vixen," 1923), after a series of whimsical captioned drawings published in a Prague newspaper; *Včc Makropoulos* ("The Makropoulos affair", 1925) after a surrealistic play by Karel Čapek, whose futuristic satire *R. U. R.* was the source of the word "robot," one of the few international borrowings from a Slavic language; and *Z mrtvého domu* ("From the house of the dead", 1928), after a grim novel of prison life by Fyodor Dostoyevsky.

In addition to these operas, between the ages of sixty-two and seventy-four Janáček wrote a large concert setting of the Slavonic Liturgy, *Glagolská mše* ("Glagolitic mass", 1926); a major song cycle, *Zápisník zmizelého* ("The Diary of One Who Disappeared", 1919); several orchestral works including a *Sinfonietta* (1926) composed for an outdoor national sports rally; a dozen chamber works including two string quartets and two chamber concertos for piano (one of them, *Capriccio* for piano left-hand, flute, and brass sextet, written for a one-armed veteran of the First World War). It seemed virtually a life's work crammed into a dozen years, testifying to a revived and rejuvenated creative vitality without precedent or counterpart in the work of any other composer. (In a unique case like this one looks for as many biographical explanations as possible: another that is often cited in connection with Janáček's late explosion of creativity is an invigorating infatuation with a much younger woman who seems not to have reciprocated his passion, but served passively as a stimulant to the composer's fantasy life.)

This amazingly varied body of late work was united by the composer's newly maximalized style—more evidence, perhaps, of Janáček's access of self-confidence in the aftermath of belated success. His maximalism, typically, was what attracted to Janáček the interest of historians; but it was differently motivated from the other maximalisms we have noted, and had different consequences. Uniquely, it never took an abstract turn. Unlike any of the other maximalists (save Ives) whose music we have examined in detail, Janáček never tried to generalize his new methods into a rationalized compositional technique. Indeed he decried such efforts as leading to music that "depends on just notes and ignores man and his surroundings," or music that "seeks only an acoustic quality."[21] This put Janáček at odds even with Bartók, who was very much driven, at a certain point in his career, to generalize his socially validated innovations into a systematic technique. The act of generalization, Janáček believed, was inimical to social validation, precisely because it put social reception at risk. Of all the latter-day Herderians, he was surely the most orthodox in his insistence that his music be accessible to the population on whose natural artifacts it drew.

And that is why Janáček is generally classified as a folklorist. He never disavowed the category. In his youth he made the same kind of expeditions into the field that Bartók would later make. With an older collaborator named František Bartoš (1837–1906) he published large collections ("Bouquets") of Moravian folk songs with piano accompaniment in the 1890s. One of the most abundant genres in his catalogue of works is that of folksongs arranged for male chorus, which he produced in quantity for his own choirs to sing. As late as 1926 he observed that "if I grow at all, it is only out of folk music...."[22]

But it is nevertheless something of a misnomer, for it applies only to the earlier portion of his career, and wholly fails to account for his maximalist phase, the very period that Adorno was so eager to ascribe to Janáček's "progressive folkloristic tendencies." The list of late operas given above, unlike a comparable list covering the first four decades of Janáček's career, is not confined to Czech subject matter to which collected folklore might have been appropriately applied. Two are adaptations from Russian literature and have Russian settings, and *The Makropoulos Affair*, while nominally set in Prague, concerns an international opera diva, who knows but renounces the secret of eternal life (a "universal" subject if ever there was one), and her very urbane circle of acquaintances.

The subjects of these operas did not grow out of folklore at all, and neither did the music that provides their ambience. That music grew out of a natural element that Janáček valued even more than folklore as a wellspring for art. To complete now the sentence of which the first half was quoted two paragraphs earlier, Janáček declared in 1926 that he grew out of "folk music, *and out of human speech*," the most basic expressive element of all, which (in Janáček's passionately held view) underlies all folklore, as well as all cultivated art.

Notes:

(18) Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, pp. 35–36n5.

(19) Mirka Zemanová, ed., *Janáček's Uncollected Essays on Music* (London: Marion Boyars, 1989), p. 61.

(20) Desmond Shawe-Taylor, "Jeritza, Maria," in *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, Vol. II (London: Macmillan, 1992), p. 893.

(21) *Janáček's Uncollected Essays on Music*, p. 61.

(22) *Ibid*.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Leoš Janácek

Czech Republic: Art music

SPEECH-TUNELETS

Chapter: CHAPTER 7 Social Validation
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

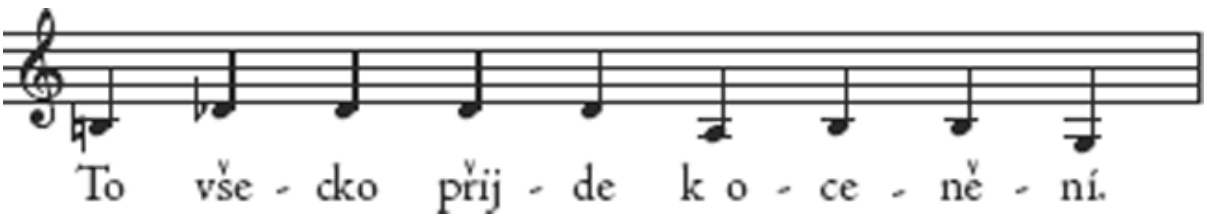
Janáček's veneration of speech as thought-and-feeling-made-incarnate gets down beneath the level even of Herder's original argument about human linguistic diversity, and in fact somewhat contradicts it. The thoughts and feelings to which language gives access are the common emotional fund of humanity. What is linguistically diverse is the means of expression, which inevitably influences the thing expressed but is not tantamount to it. That is why Janáček felt he could express and intensify through a music based on Czech speech the thoughts and feelings of Russian merchants and prisoners, or an international opera diva of French birth, and through that music communicate universal feelings to international audiences. But full expressive intensity in any language could only be achieved through maximum (that is, maximalized) particularity—in Janáček's case a music more closely based on the rhythms and intonations of the Czech language than any previous music had ever been based on any language.

Janáček planted the seed of his maximalist style around 1897 when he began jotting down what he called *nápčvky mluvy*—literally "speech-tunelets"[23] (as translated by Michael Beckerman), better known in English as speech melodies—in notebooks. It seems significant that the beginnings of his interest in notating speech melodies should have roughly coincided with the end of his folksong collecting activity. The one effectively replaced the other as essential bearer, for Janáček, of musical truth. Folk song was the highly stylized and already generalized product of what at the level of speech was fully specific and particular.

The melodic curves and rhythms of speech, though dictated to a large extent by the conventions of language, were also influenced by spontaneous emotion, and by a person's individual identity. They were, in Janáček's words, "windows into a person's soul."[24] He obsessively jotted down whatever distinctive speech he heard around him as a potential model for his music—even, notoriously, the last words of his dying daughter—and advocated the method for others as well. It was "objective" and "scientific" evidence for what most composers tried to capture vaguely and subjectively. Janáček began carrying around stopwatches and even more exact time-measuring devices like "Hipp's chronoscope," which gave readings of very short durations. His obsessive behavior gave him a local reputation for eccentricity that caricaturists were quick to capitalize on (see Fig. 7-4).

In a series of published articles Janáček demonstrated with examples what he thought of as his most significant discovery, the fact that speech melodies revealed subliminal thoughts and emotions unexpressed by the words alone. Some of these articles took the form of interviews in which the words of Janáček's interlocutor were furnished with musical notations. One such musically recorded conversation took place, at Janáček's request, with Bedřich Smetana's daughter, whom he interviewed in 1924, her father's centennial year. Janáček asked her to recall something her father had said, in hopes that it would disclose a distinctive speech pattern that might help account for the greatness (as well as the Czechness) of Smetana's music. The only phrase she could come up with after forty years was a remark her father had made while leafing through the score of one of his operas: "All this will be appreciated eventually" (Ex. 7-28).

fig. 7-4 Janáček with his stopwatch (caricature by Hugo Boettinger, 1928).



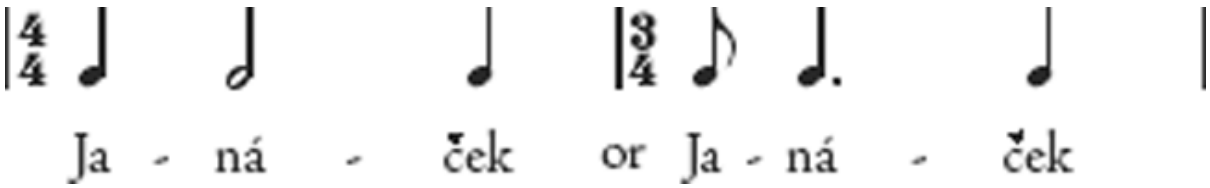
ex. 7-28 Bedřich Smetana's speech melody as recalled by his daughter and notated by Leoš Janáček

"The register of the Maestro's speech would probably have been an octave lower," Janáček remarked, but assured the reader that "the rhythm of the evenly pulsing beat and the melodic flow would be authentic," and then added, in triumphant italics: "*This is probably how Bedřich Smetana used to speak*."[25] And yet, as

Janáček knew better than anyone, Smetana's was not typical Czech speech. Its evenly pulsing beat was evidence of Smetana's having learned Czech as an adult, after his basic speech pattern had been formed on German. Native Czech speech is rhythmically distinctive in a manner that it became Janáček's obsession to capture; and that is what chiefly gave his later music its maximalist edge. This was the fundamental musical "discovery" that made a modernist of him.

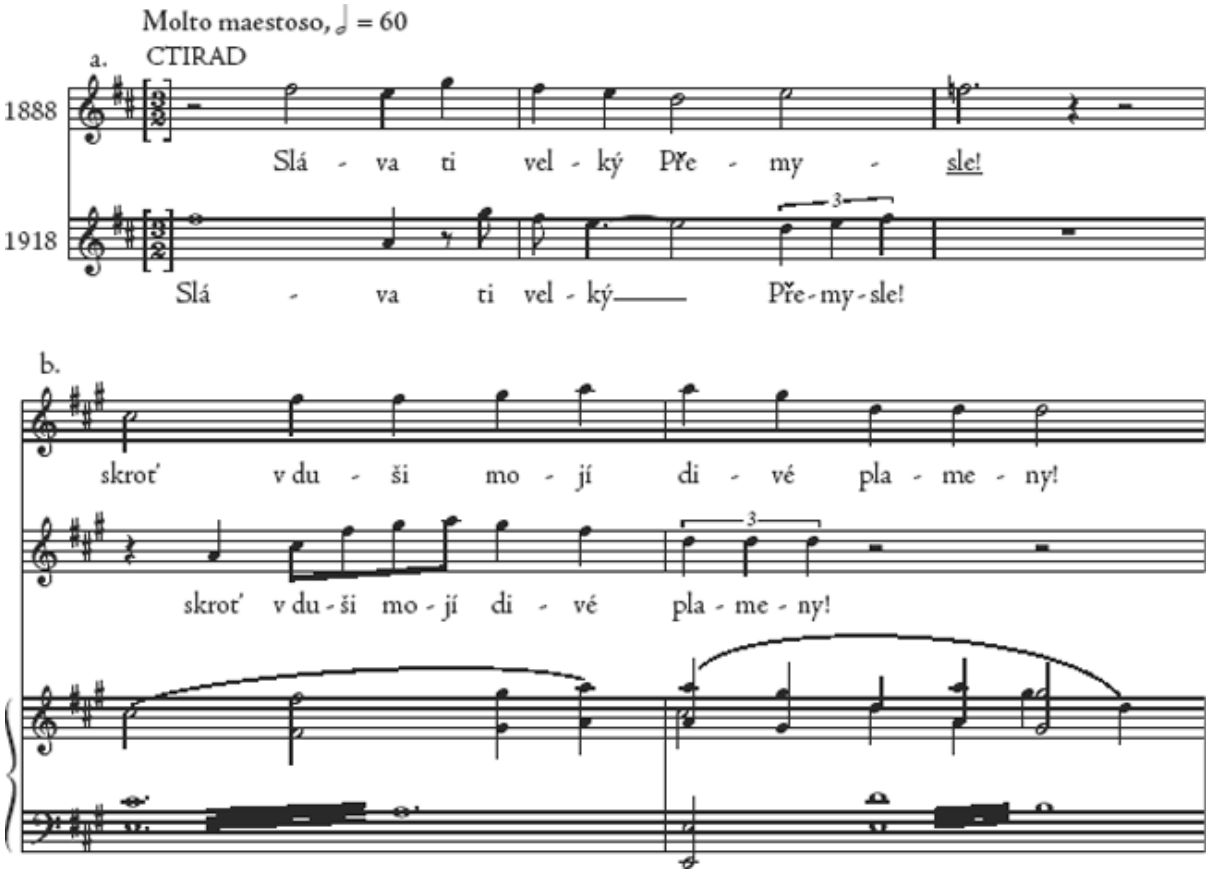
Actually, of course, it was no discovery at all, just as it was no "discovery" to observe that a speaker's tone of voice can contradict the uttered words. Anyone sensitive to irony (indeed, anyone who has been caught in a lie) knows that much; and anyone who speaks the Czech language knows its two most distinctive rhythmic/dynamic properties (both of which it shares with Hungarian). According to the first, a word in Czech can have only one accent, and it all but invariably comes at the beginning. The second is a strongly marked distinction between short and long syllables that is independent of the stress pattern. The Czech diacritic resembling the French "acute accent" is placed over long syllables. When the syllable so marked is not the first syllable, stress and length fail to coincide; the word is "syncopated" in a manner that anyone learning Czech as an adult finds difficult at first to grasp and imitate.

A good illustration is the name Janáček itself. Faithfully rendered in musical notation (as in Ex. 7-29, which reproduces an example from John Tyrrell's history of Czech opera[26]), it looks (particularly in time) like something out of a late score by Janáček himself. The reason why it looks typically Janáčekian is that before him composers did not set the Czech language with such fastidious attention to its rhythms, whether it was because (like Smetana) they spoke—and heard—the language imperfectly, or because (like Dvořák) they set verse librettos that imposed on the words a "foreign" rhythm.



ex. 7-29 "Janáček" as a speech tunelet

Janáček, too, began his operatic career setting that kind of libretto. After 1916, however, when the success of *Jenůfa* gave him the courage of his musical convictions, he insisted on a laconic prose style that would not interfere with the natural rhythms of the language—and that meant writing his librettos himself, so loath were most professional writers to sacrifice the elegance of imported verse forms. To illustrate the fanatical care with prosody that arose out of Janáček's conviction that "objectively" rendered speech patterns were an infallible register of human subjectivity, and to gauge the impact of that "scientific" purism on his later music, John Tyrrell set up an ingenious musicological experiment, contrasting the text setting in two versions of the composer's earliest opera, *Šárka* (1887–88), the first dating from long before the "discovery" of speech melodies, the other from 1918, at the beginning of the composer's maximalist adventure.[27] Ex. 7-30 shows two of Tyrrell's most revealing specimens:



ex. 7-30 Comparative settings from Janáčeks *Šárka*

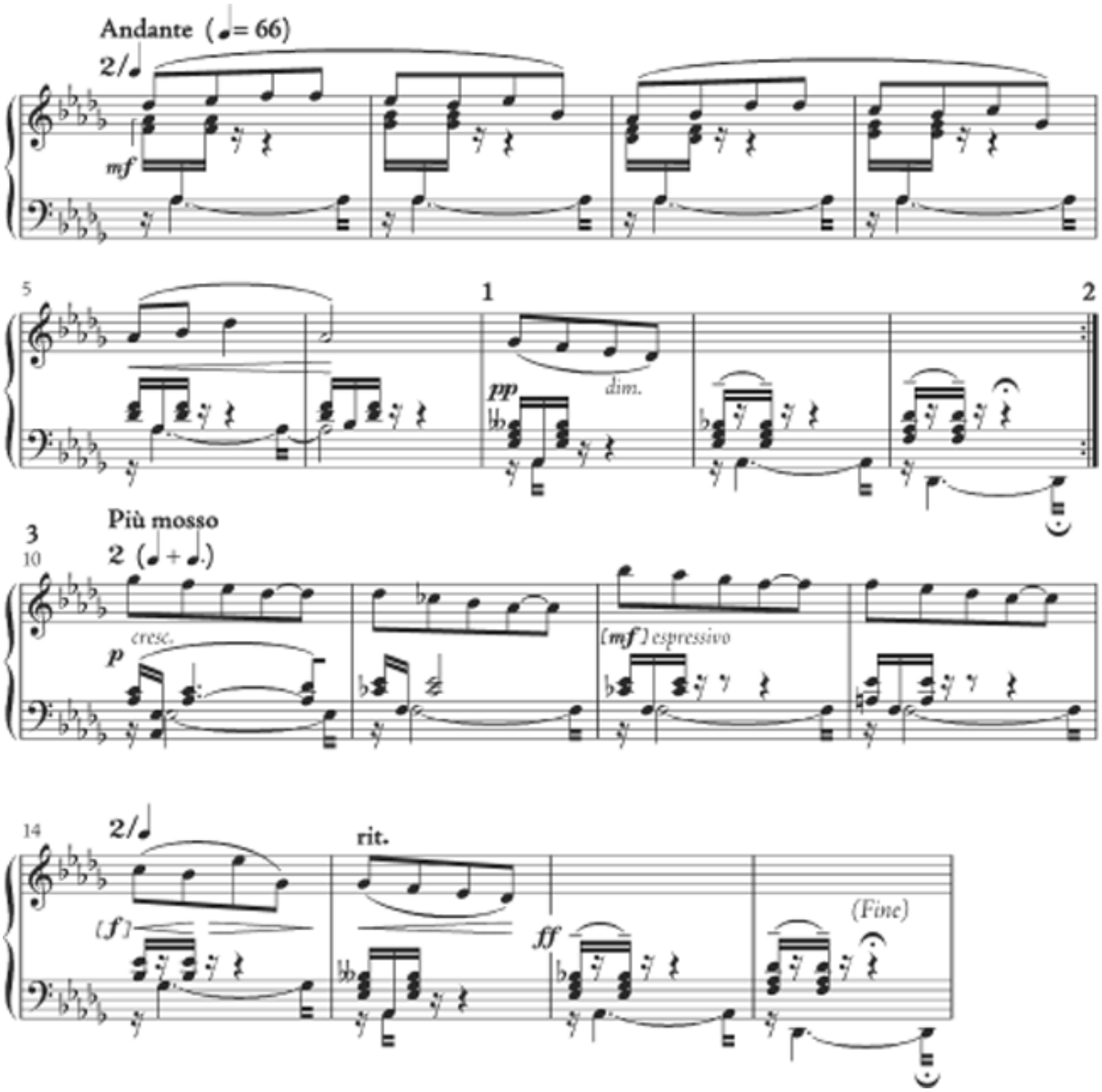
In Ex. 7-30a, the word "Přemysle" is contracted into a triplet so that its last syllable will not fall on a downbeat and thus pick up an unwanted musical stress. Even more striking is the elongation of the second syllable in "velký," so that it lasts seven times as long as the accented first syllable. In the earlier setting, only the accent had been faithful to the word's normal pronunciation, not the relative length of the syllables, which is the more distinctively Czech index of fidelity. The result of both changes is to make the line remarkably varied, and at the same time remarkably asymmetric, in rhythm. Symmetry is even more graphically violated in Ex. 7-30b.

There was only one previous composer who used rhythms as finicky as these in operatic music, and for a similar reason. That was Musorgsky, the radical Russian "realist" whose lifetime overlapped somewhat with Janáček's, and whose music was surely known to the Czech composer. (*Boris Godunov* was a repertory opera in Czech theaters beginning in 1910.) Janáček's interest in Russian culture and his familiarity with it are attested, as we have seen, by the literary sources of two of his late operas. Such a "Pan-Slavic" interest, it is worth adding, was common among Czech patriots who resented Austrian rule.

Yet it would be rash to assume that Musorgsky was a decisive "influence" on Janáček, and not only because Janáček denied it. Composers are rarely forthcoming or trustworthy on this question; but the fact that Janáček publicly claimed in 1903 that *Jenůfa* was the first opera ever written to a prose libretto strongly suggests that he was unfamiliar as of that date even with *Boris Godunov*, which has a lengthy and famous comic scene set quite conspicuously (and groundbreakingly) to prose. (For what it is worth, Janáček is not known to have attended a performance of Musorgsky's opera until 1923.)

Traces of Janáček's interest in speech melody extend further back than his maximalist years, and the most distinctive aspect of his prosody—namely, the fastidious syncopations arising out of the noncoincidence of stress and length in Czech—can have no counterpart or precedent in Musorgsky because the feature has no counterpart in Russian. Most of all, Janáček's use of speech rhythms became far more pervasive in his music

than in Musorgsky's, and led to a far more radical (and a far more general) recasting of his style. If Musorgsky was an influence on Janáček, then, Janáček was all the more impressively a maximalist.



ex. 7-31 Leoš Janáček, *A Blown-away Leaf* (from *On an Overgrown Path*, no. 2), mm. 1–17

So profound and formative was Janáček's dependence on Czech speech rhythms that it remained evident in his music even when there was no speech. It pervaded his instrumental music, too, and the instrumental component of his operas, informing every musical level with the dramatic significance of speech. That is perhaps the operas' greatest distinction. But to appreciate it in context a preliminary instrumental example may be useful. Ex. 7-31 comes from is a little piano piece, *Listek odvanuty* ("A blown-away leaf"), originally composed for harmonium in 1901 and eventually published in a set called *On an Overgrown Path* (*Po zarostlém chodničku*) in 1911. Ostensibly a folkloristic piece, it is *really* a study in long unstressed "syllables." To accommodate them the basic duple meter of the melody in the second strain is distended to ; the final eighth is never played, however, just "waited out."

Notes:

(23) Michael Beckerman, *Janáček as Theorist* (Stuyvesant, NY.: Pendragon Press, 1994), p.133.

(24) *Janàcek's Uncollected Essays on Music*, pp. 121–22.

(25) *Ibid*., p. 56.

(26) John Tyrrell, *Czech Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 255.

(27) Tyrrell, *Czech Opera*, pp. 294, 296.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Leoš Janácek

Káťa Kabanová

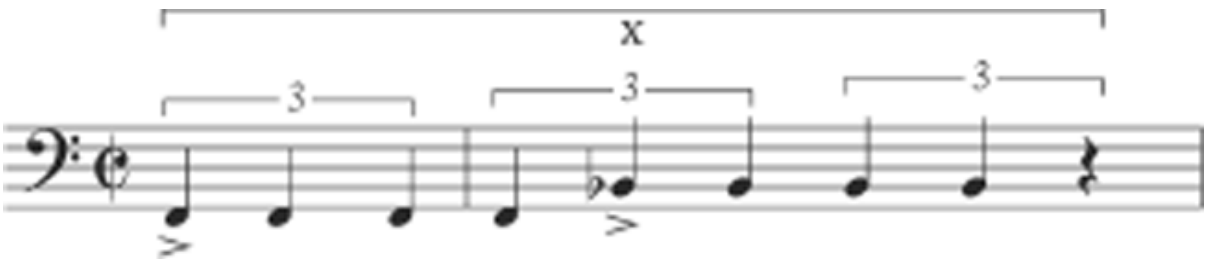
A MUSICO-DRAMATIC LABORATORY

Chapter: CHAPTER 7 Social Validation
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Rhythms like these pervade Janáček's later operas, in vocal and instrumental parts alike. Indeed, the orchestral part, which provides the essential continuity in these declamatory works, consists largely of ostinatos drawn from key vocal phrases (along with leitmotifs of a more conventional kind). It is sometimes wrongly assumed that these ostinatos are drawn directly from life, by way of the composer's speech-tunelet notebooks. Rather, they are drawn from the librettos, as mediated by the composer's own imagined speech. *Kat'a Kabanová*, the first opera wholly conceived after *Jenůfa's* Prague premiere, was the great laboratory of Janáček's maximalist technique.

The title character, Katerina Kabanová (Katya for short), is a merchant wife in a Volga town, who takes a lover during her husband's absence on a business trip, confesses in shame, and, hounded by her vindictive mother-in-law, kills herself in despair. The concluding portion of the last scene contains the lovers' last meeting, the suicide, and its aftermath. It is fairly self-contained, but knowledge of the origins of two of its themes is needed for a full grasp of its musical and dramatic properties, and their relationship to speech melody.

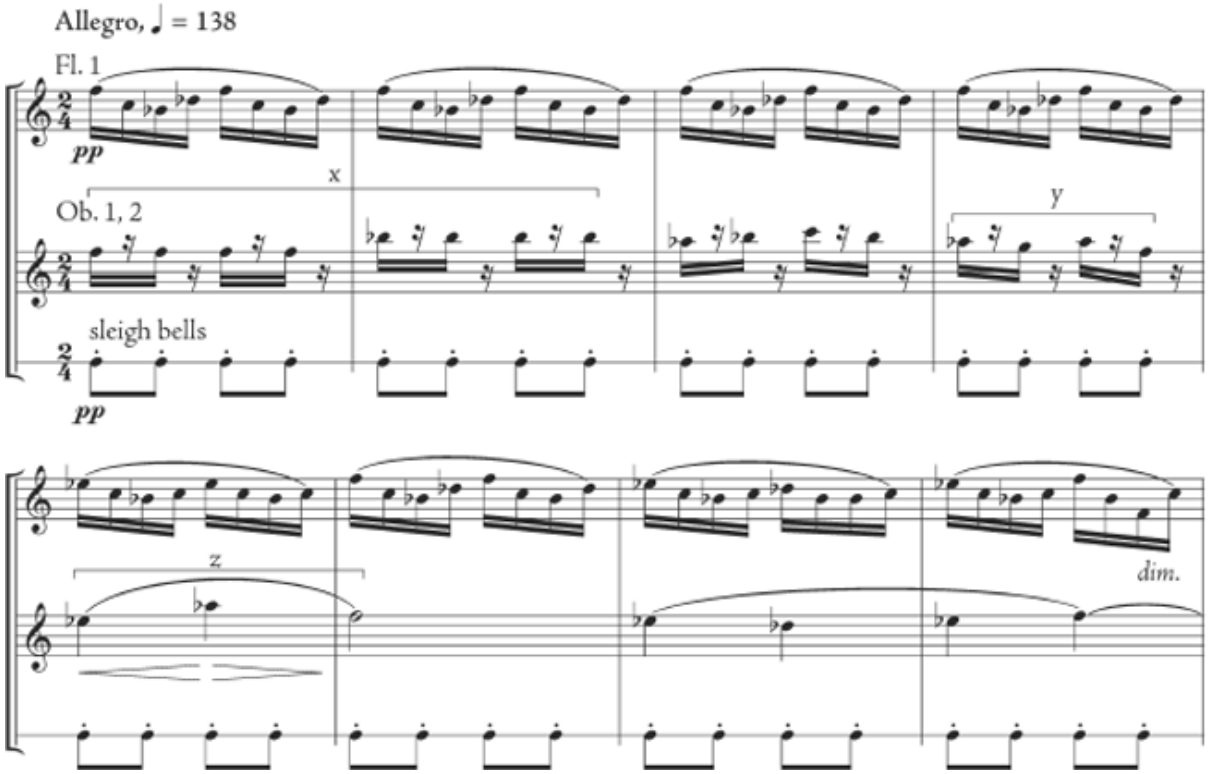
The first (Ex. 7-32a) is the opera's main leitmotif, first heard at the very beginning of the overture. It consists simply of eight thwacks on the kettledrum, four on the dominant and four on the tonic. Although its aural effect is "duple-metered," it is always notated in triplets so that when it appears in counterpoint with other thematic material it sounds as though it is moving at a slower tempo than the rest. This rhythmic effect enables it to intervene portentously at fraught moments of the drama to sound an "implacable" note of doom. It is especially prone to appear whenever Katya's music soars lyrically aloft, to quash it. At the beginning of act III it is finally given an "objective" referent in the thunder accompanying the storm that gave Ostrovsky's original play its title.



ex. 7-32a Leos Janáček, *Káťa Kabanová*, motifs, timpani motif

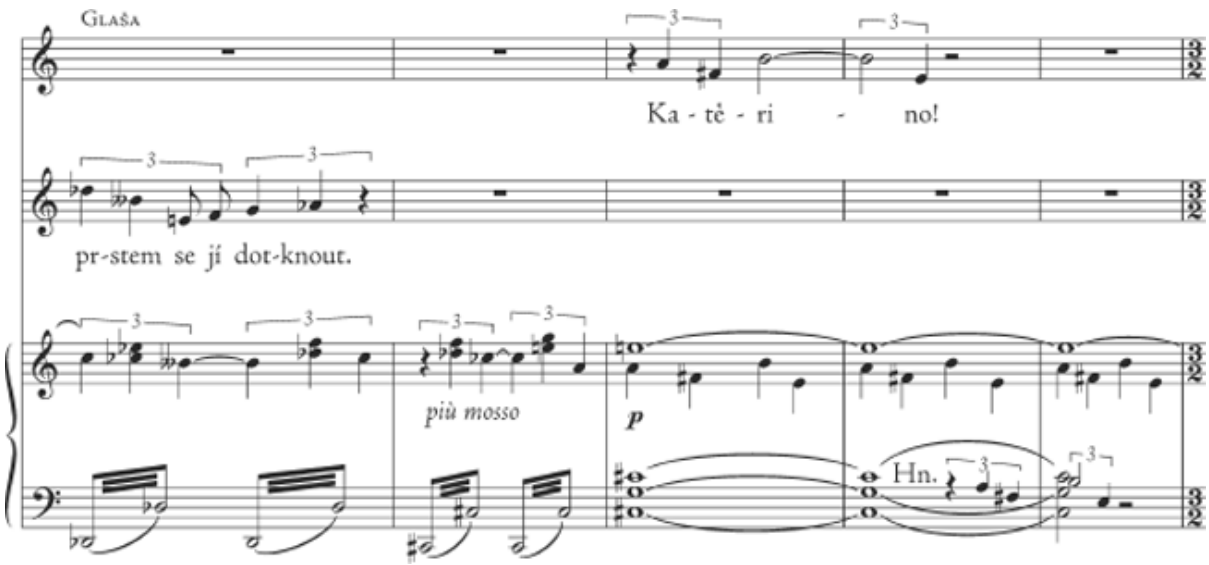
The other motif is one that is developed at the beginning of the final scene from another idea planted early on. The first Allegro theme in the overture gives a preview of the music that accompanies the husband's departure on his business trip in act I (Ex. 7-32b). On the surface it is merry traveling music, set for flutes and oboes, accompanied by the characteristic sound of Russian sleigh bells. Closer inspection or longer acquaintance reveals the hidden resonance of the menacing timpani motif at its beginning (marked "X"). And

as the opera unfolds, the myriad repetitions of the group marked "Y" invest that group, too, with a dramatic significance that accords with its resemblance (surely no accident) to the beginning of the Dies Irae, the old funeral chant that had carried a grisly baggage of associations through the whole nineteenth century, ever since Berlioz had quoted it in the *Symphonie fantastique*.

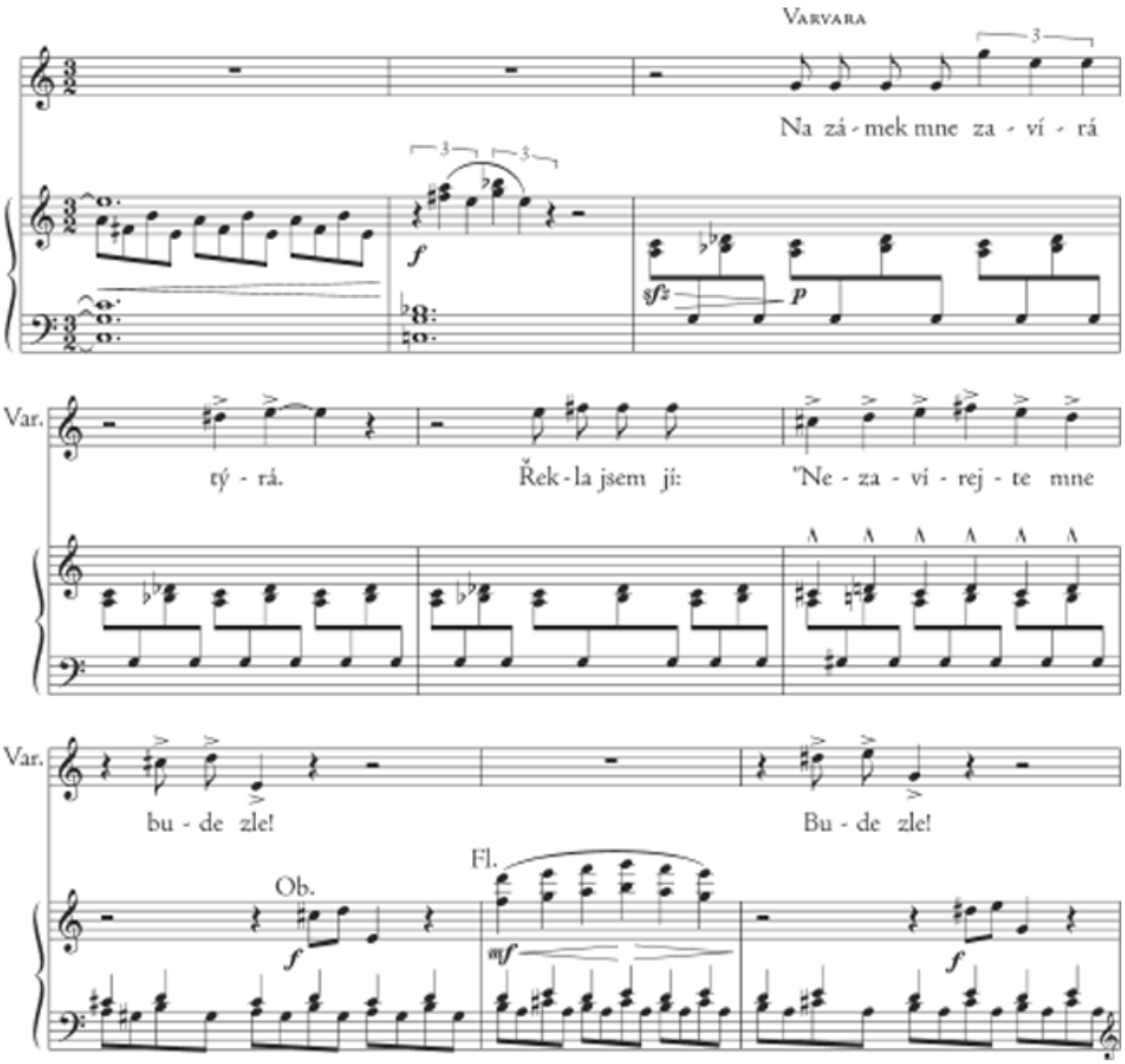


ex. 7-32b Leoš Janáček, *Káťa Kabanová*, motifs, Allegro theme

At the beginning of the final scene, the husband and a servant rush on stage in pursuit of Katya, who has already confessed her sin and fled. They shout her name to a speech-tunelet that reverberates in the orchestra at three levels of diminution (Ex. 7-32c). The tunelet is then immediately subjected to an expressive chromatic transformation that becomes the next orchestral ostinato (Ex. 7-32d).

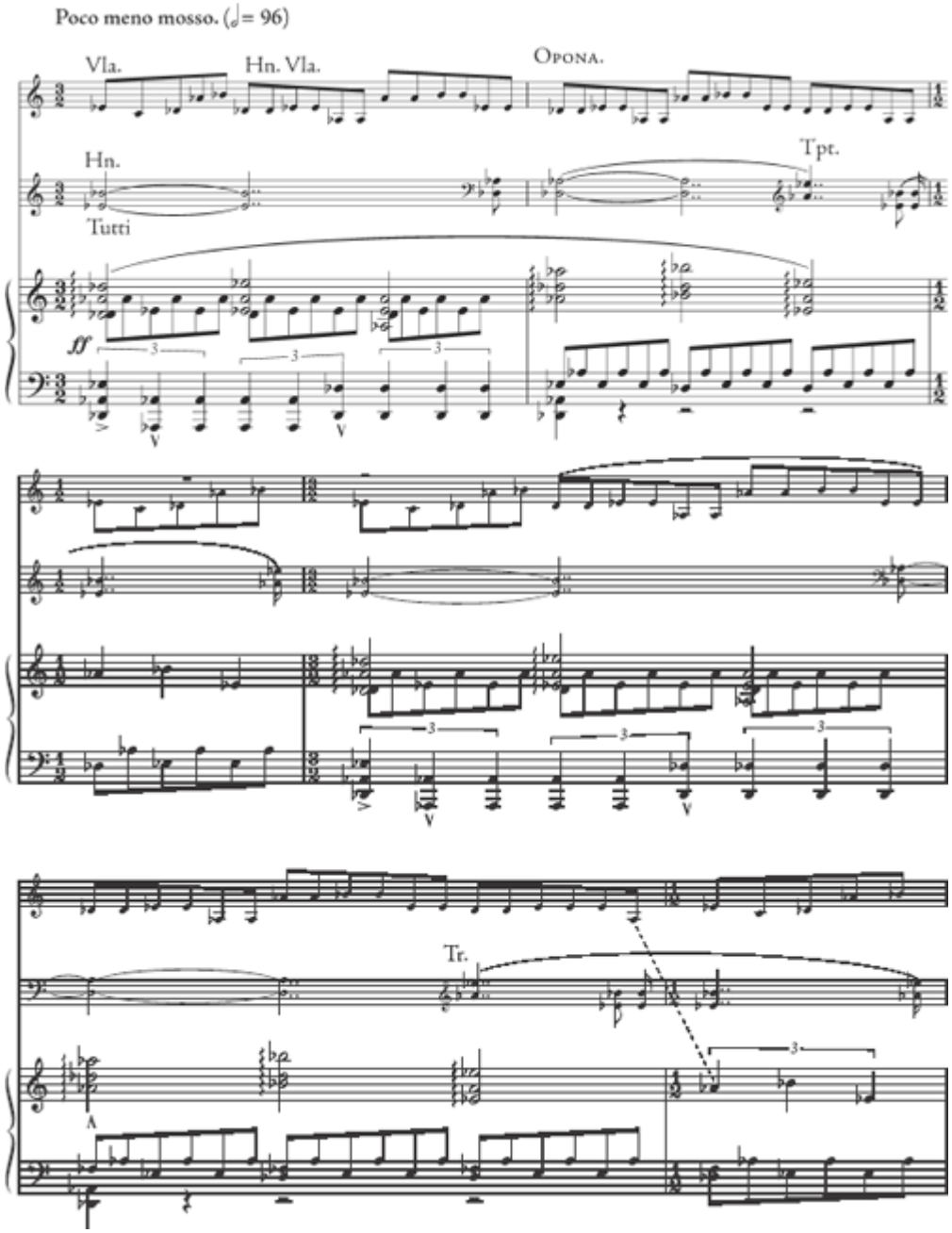


ex. 7-32c Leos Janáček, *Káťa Kabanová*, motifs, "Katérino!" with its accompaniment



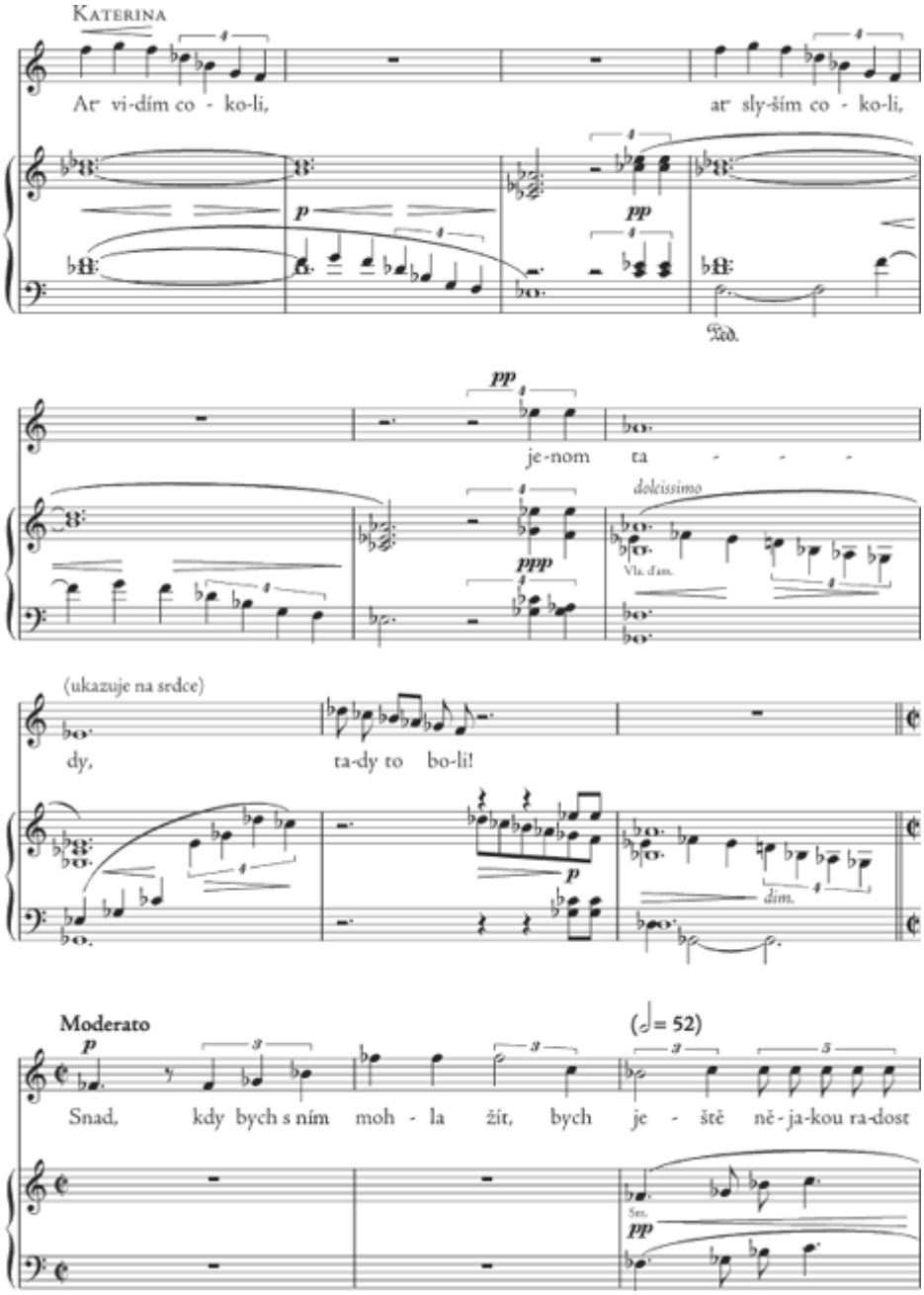
ex. 7-32d Leoš Janáček, *Káťa Kabanová*, motifs, chromatic transformation and ensuing ostinato

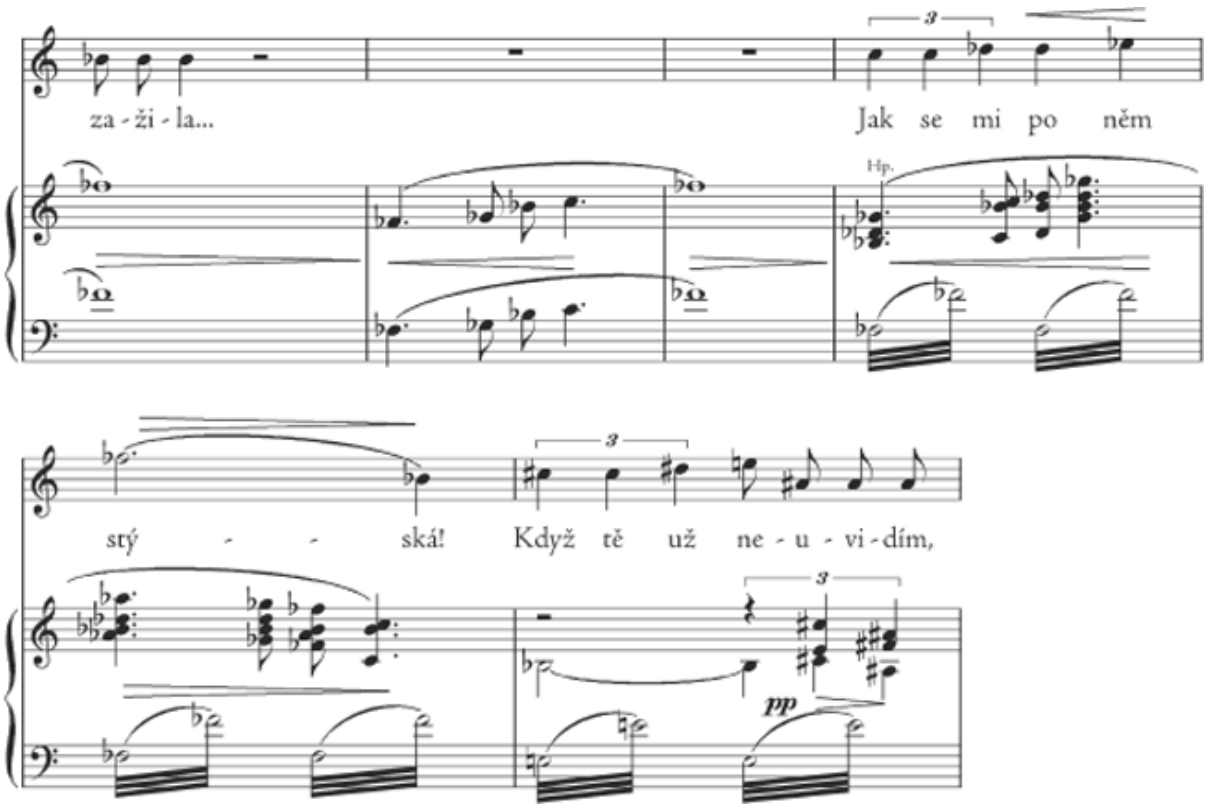
Another example is found in the last measure of Ex. 7-32d, when the oboe immediately picks up the speech tunelet "Bude zle!" ("There'll be trouble," or "You'll be sorry"). As an instrumental motif, the phrase haunts the music that follows; but it had already appeared in the orchestra at the very beginning of the scene, in advance of (and disguising!) its derivation from a speech-tunelet (Ex. 7-32e). Thus speech pervades the music even before it is heard as speech, and relates dramaturgically to the more "purely" melodic aspects of the music as well.



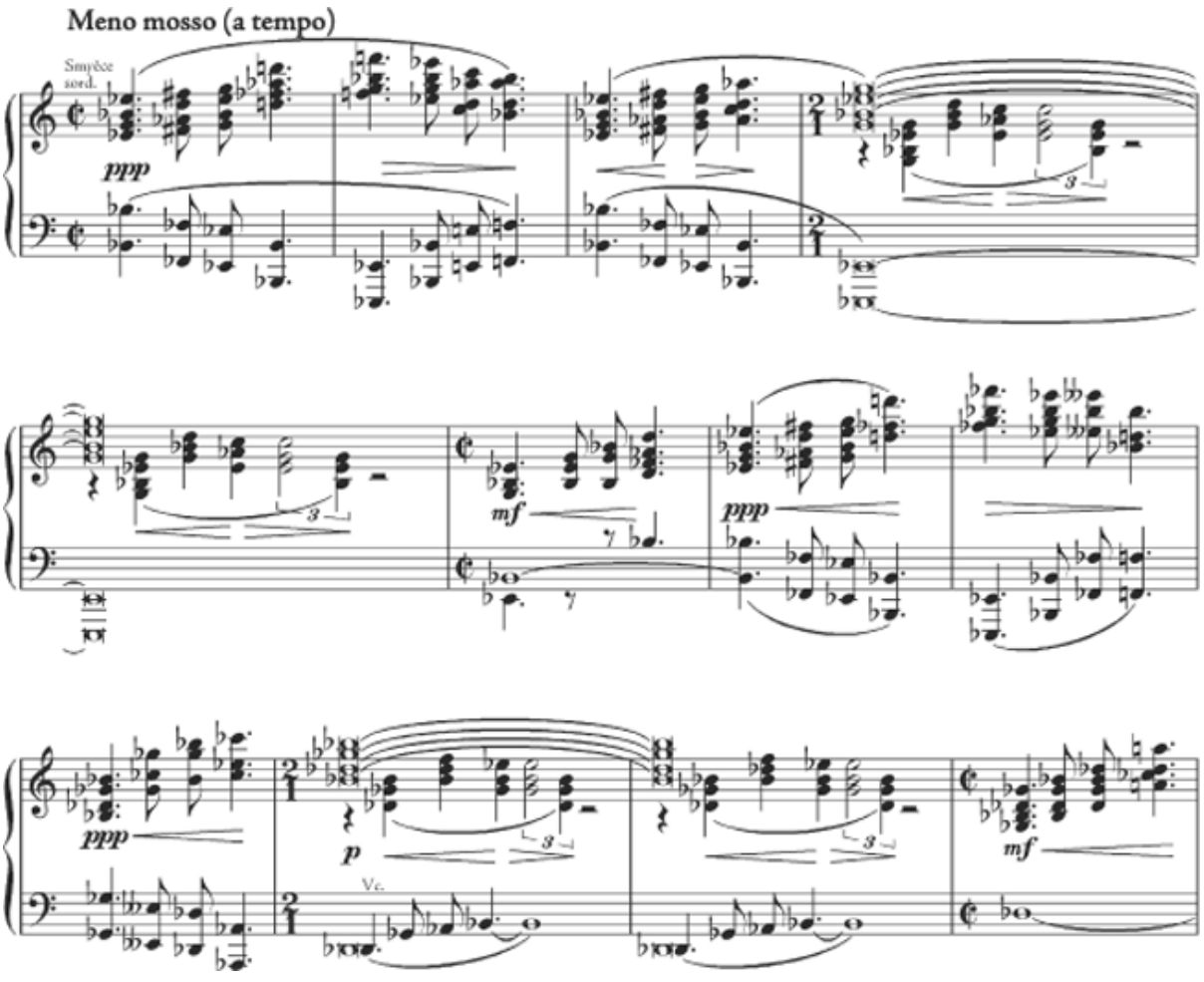
ex. 7-32e Leoš Janáček, *Kát'a Kabanová*, motifs, Curtain (*Opona/Vorhang*)
Music

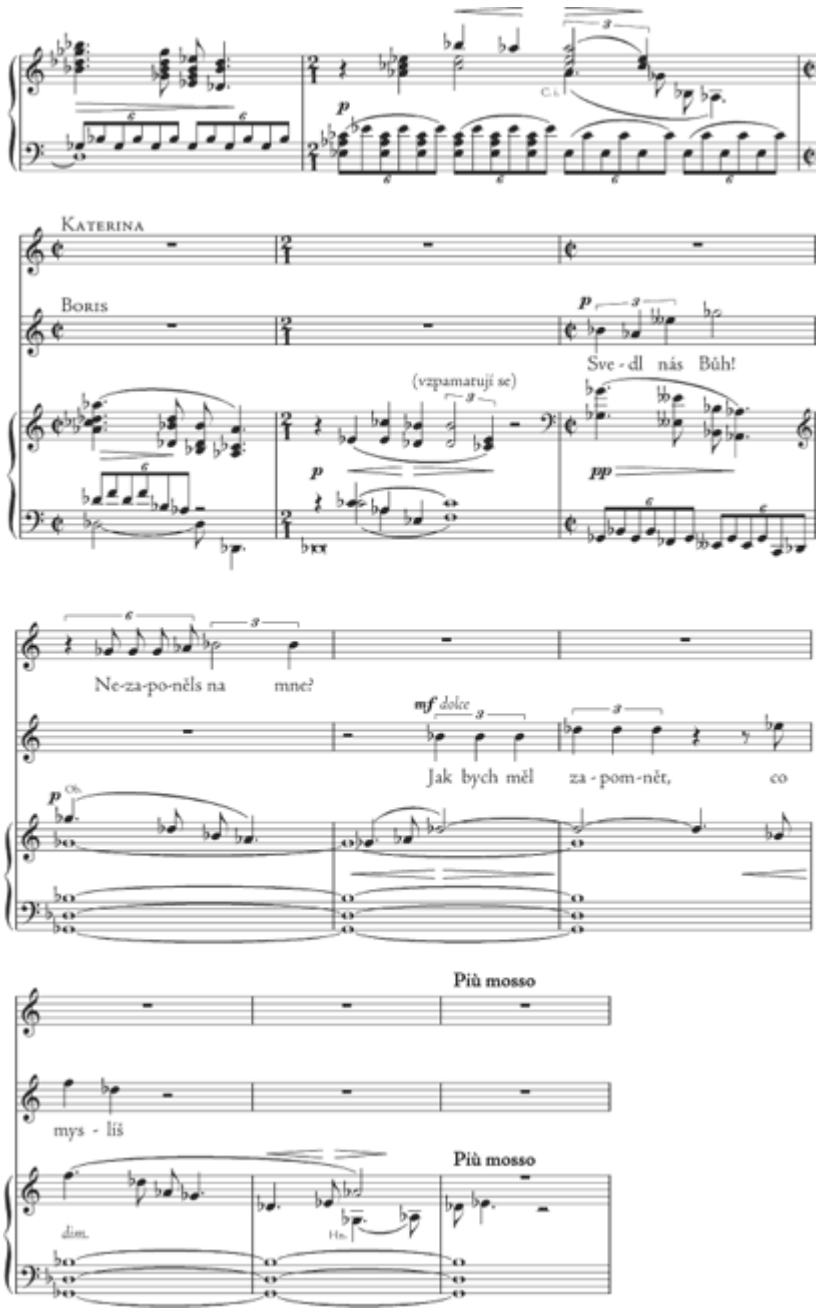
Turning now to the concluding scene and following the musical- dramatic development in the process of its unfolding, we may observe similar transformations of speech-tunelets into orchestral motifs at every turn. One happens almost immediately (Ex. 7-33a), when Katya's obsessive "At' vidím cokoli, at' slyším cokoli" ("All I see around me, all I hear around me"), reverberates in the orchestra as if illustrating the thought. But the most impressive and dramatically significant instance occurs at the Moderato that immediately follows, where the tunelet arising out of Katya's wishful line, "Snad, kdybych s ním mohla žít" ("Ah, if only I could live with him") is immediately echoed in a phrase that, gently rocking in alternation with its descending counterpart, accompanies the whole last meeting of the lovers (Ex. 7-33b).


Katerina
Ať vi-dím co - ko-li,
ať sly-ším co - ko-li,
p
pp
Ped.
pp
je-nom ta - - -
dolcissimo
ppp
Vla. d'am.
(ukazuje na srdce)
dy, ta-dy to bo-li!
p
dim.
Moderato
(♩= 52)
p
Snad, kdy bych s ním moh - la žít, bych je - ště ně - ja-kou ra-dost
Ten.
pp



ex. 7-33a Leoš Janáček, *Kát'a Kabanová*, Act III, scene 2, obsessive reverberations of speech tunelet

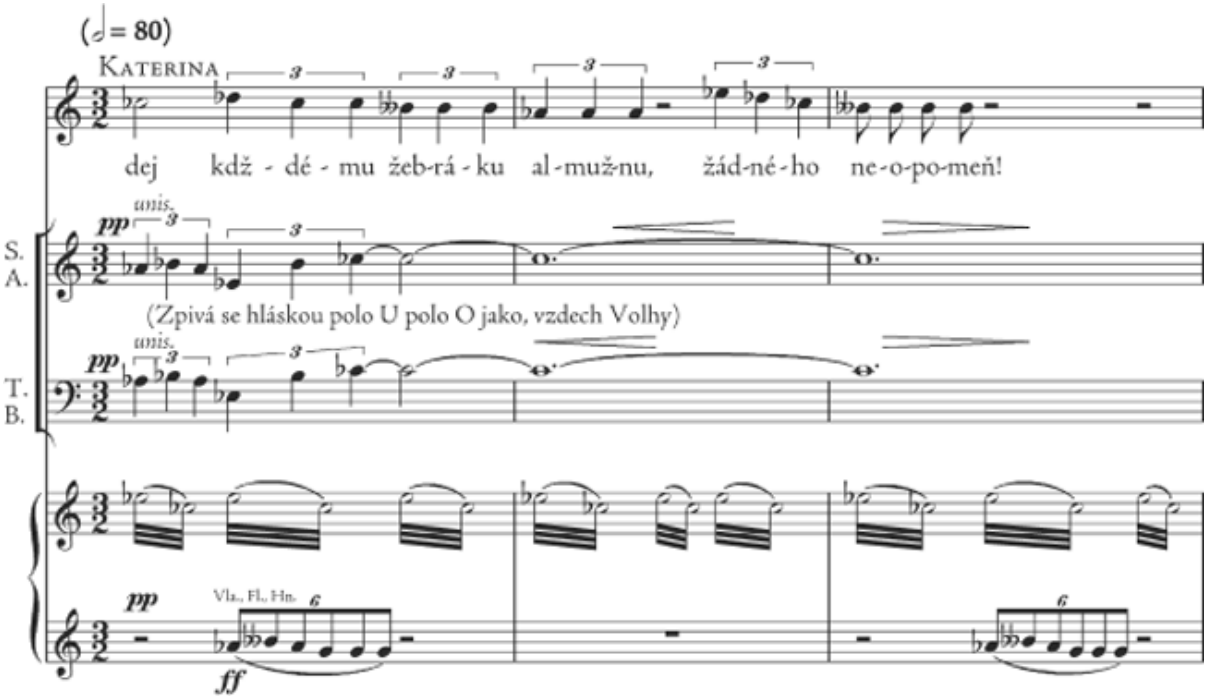




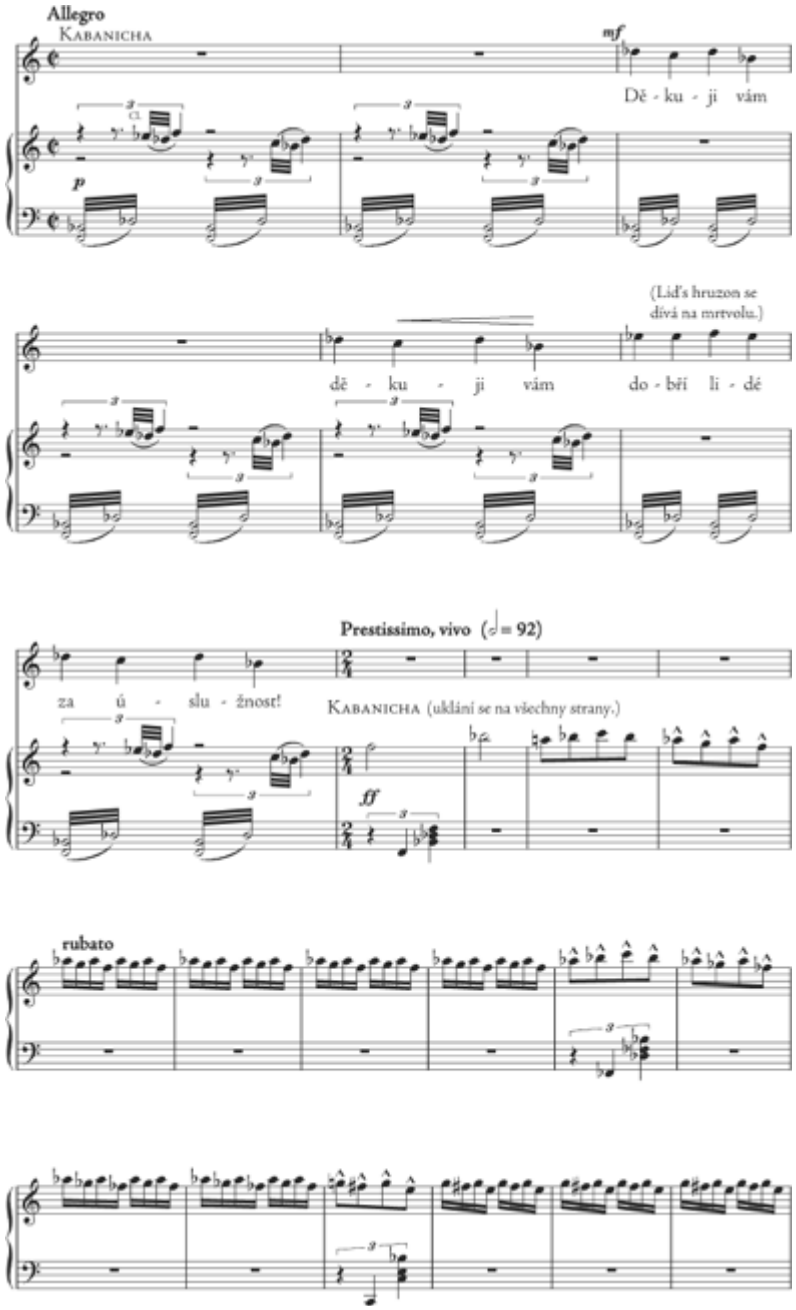
ex. 7-33b Leoš Janáček, *Káťa Kabanová*, Act III, scene 2, transformation of speech tunelet into love music

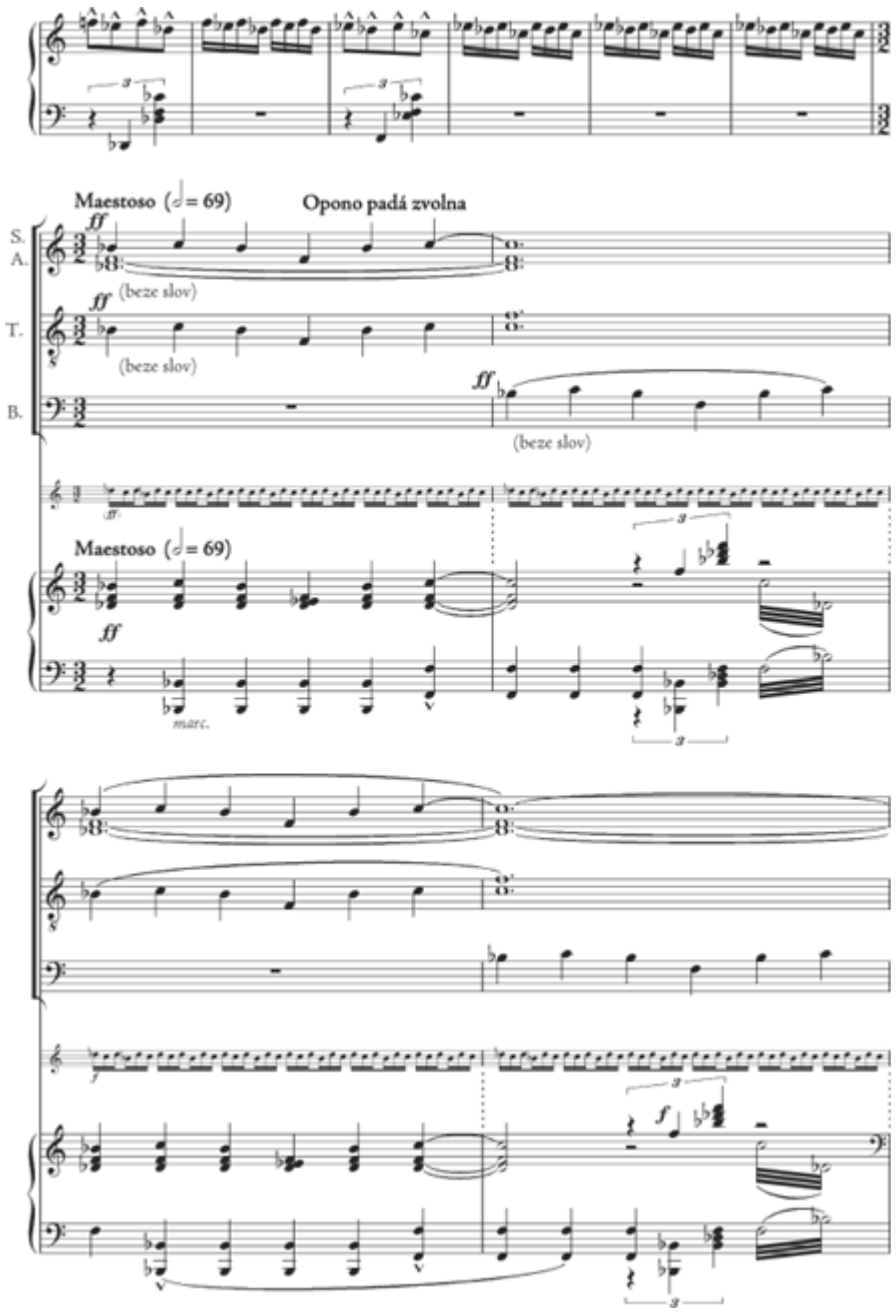
Although the resemblance is patent, neither the pitch sequence nor the rhythm of the tunelet is exactly paralleled by the ostinato. The rhythm has been adjusted, possibly, to recall in its regular long-short-short-long pattern the rhythmic palindromes (or "mirror-rhythm,"[28] as Tyrrell calls it) of Moravian folk songs. If so, it must have been an unconscious impulse that guided the composer's fancy, since Moravian folklore would seem to have little to contribute to the expressive ambience of an opera set in Russia. To identify Janáček's music with it here creates a "problem." Taking a closer look at the words to which the original tunelet is set in Ex. 7-33a, however, we notice that the last vowel in the triplet (*s ním*) carries the mark of lengthening, so that when pronounced idiomatically by a Czech singer, its rhythm would already approach that of the orchestral ostinato. It is likely that Janáček notated the orchestral part differently from the vocal so as to indicate to the instrumentalists something of the rhythm the singer would produce "instinctively." All the closer, then, are the implicit bonds between the music at all its levels and the contours and rhythms of Czech speech. Speech, with all its attendant and automatic emotional expression, pervades the ambient music in which the characters live and breathe.

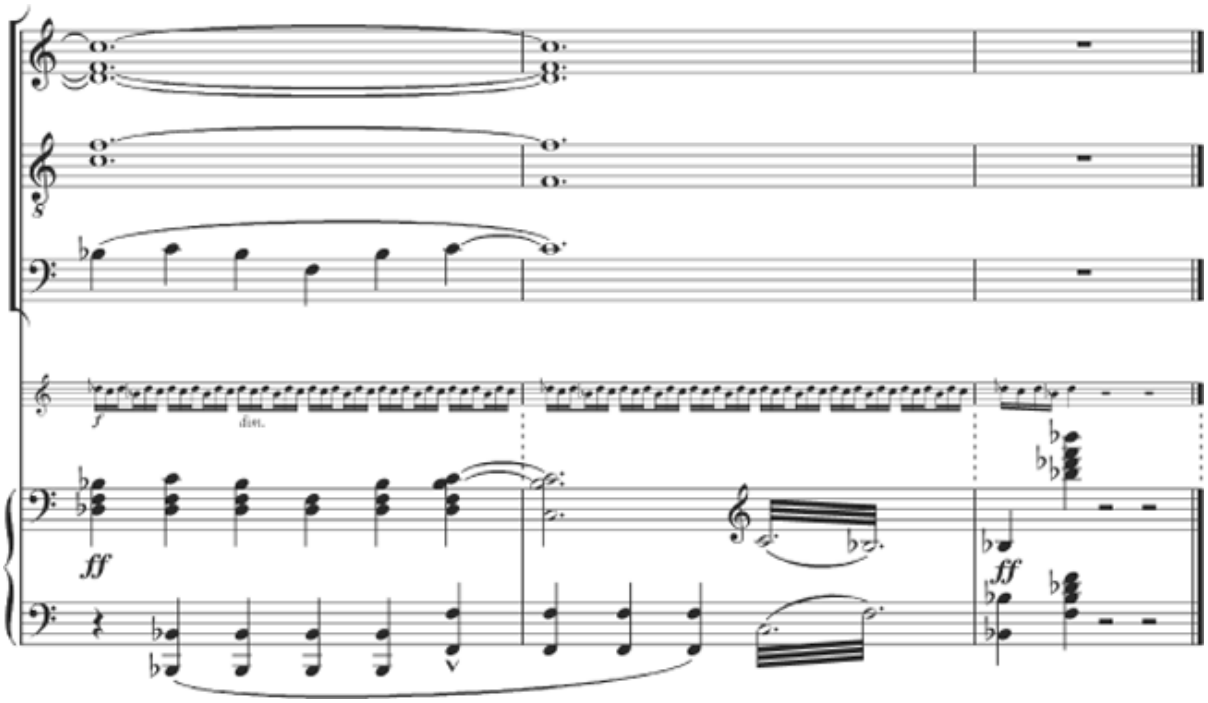
As Boris, her lover, prepares to take his final leave of her, Katya begins to hallucinate, hearing an offstage chorus that sings to an unearthly vowel that Janáček directs be "somewhere between U and O," representing "the sighing of the Volga" into which she will soon be hurling herself (Ex. 7-34a). The pentatonic motive thus introduced, which shares many intervals with the complex of motives quoted in Ex. 7-32, participates along with them at the opera's grisly climax, where all of these motivic relationships reach an epitome (Ex. 7-34b). The last human voice is the mother-in-law's, icily dismissing the horrified onlookers with thanks for their attention. Her music is based on Ex. 7-32b, with an extra emphasis on the "Y" motif, associated with the Dies Irae. Following that, a stormy little orchestral fantasy brings the opera to a close, bluntly juxtaposing the "X" and "Y" motives against the "Volga sigh," while the ostinato repetitions of "Y" ineluctably recall the obsessive repetitions of Katya's name at the beginning of the scene (Ex. 7-32c).



ex. 7-34a Leoš Janáček, *Káťa Kabanová*, Act III, scene 2, "Sighing of the Volga"


Allegro
Kabanicha
mf
Dě - ku - ji vám
p
(Lidʼs hruzou se dívá na mrtvolu.)
dě - ku - ji vám do - bří li - dé
Prestissimo, vivo (𝅗𝅥 = 92)
za ú - slu - žnost!
Kabanicha (uklání se na všechny strany.)
ff
rubato


Maestoso (𝅗𝅥 = 69)
Opono padá zvolna
S.
A.
T.
B.
ff
(beze slov)
marc.
f

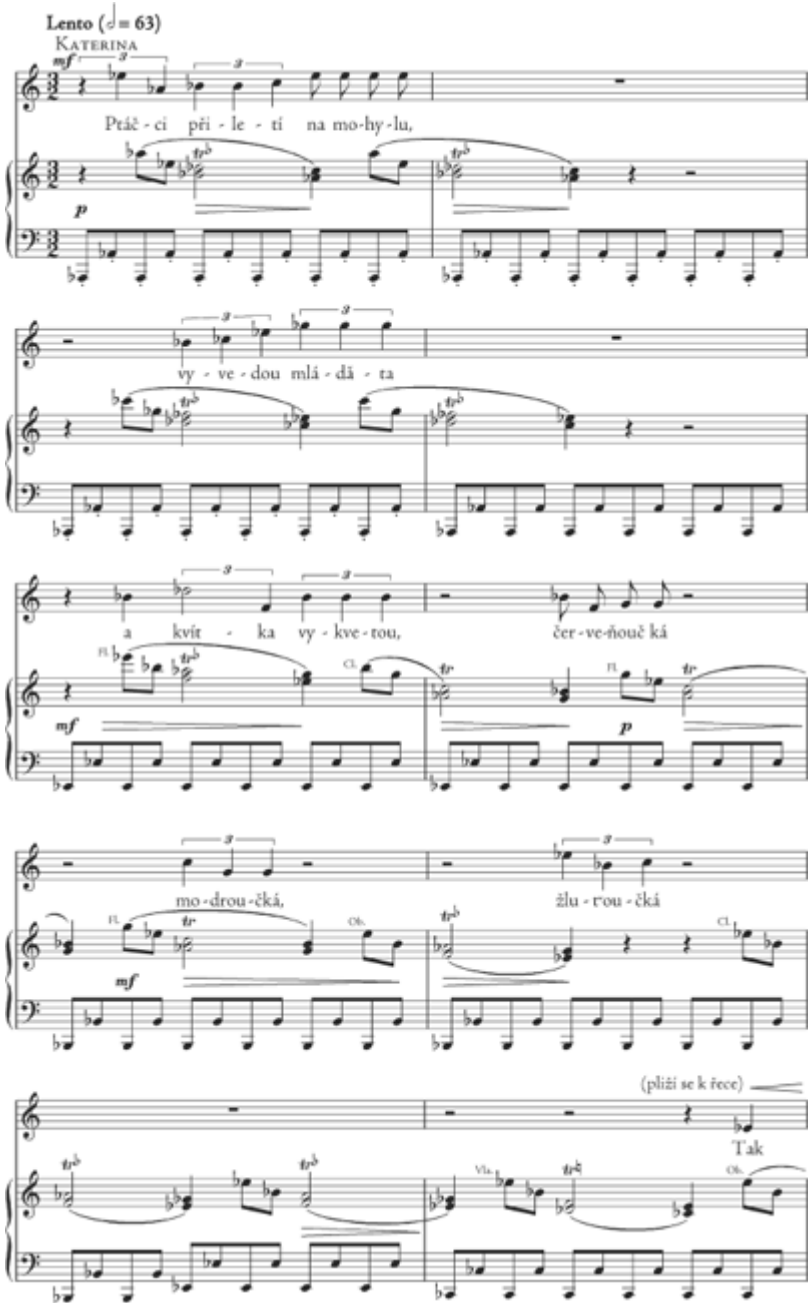


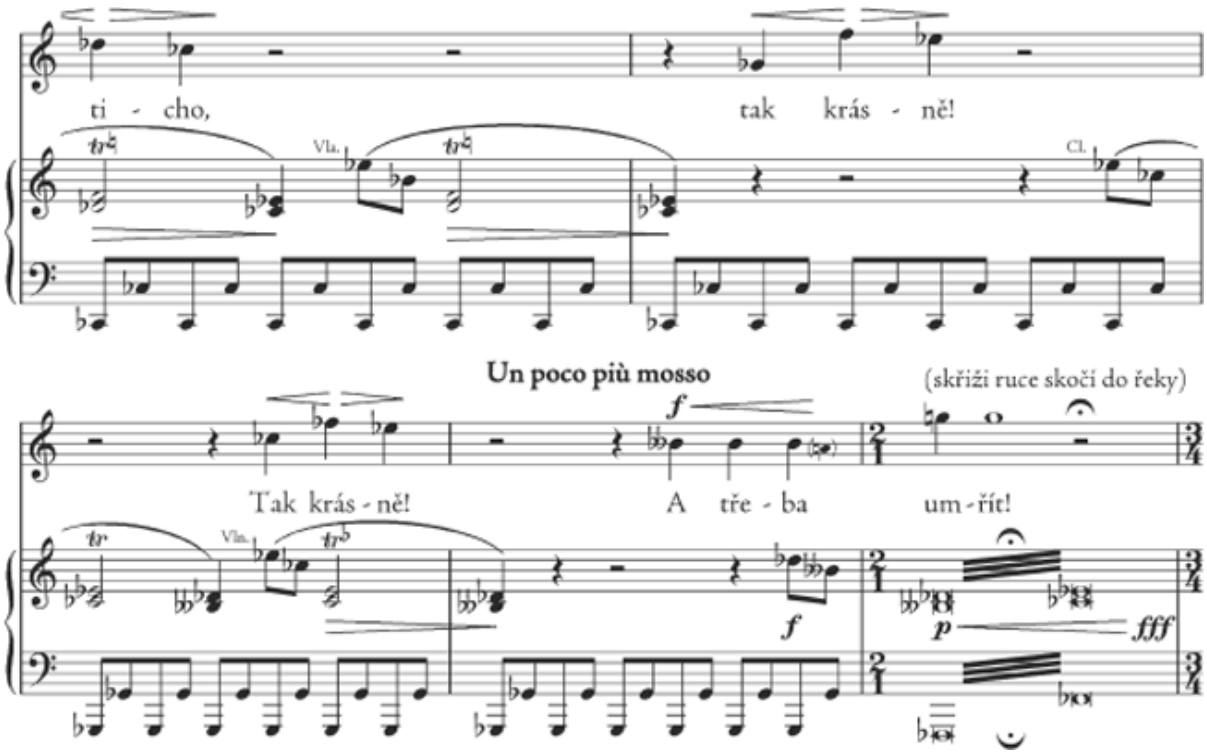
ex. 7-34b Leoš Janáček, *Kát'a Kabanová*, Act III, scene 2, end

Katerina's final page of music (Ex. 7-35), beginning where she hearkens dementedly to the singing of birds, seems suddenly, and startlingly, to resemble a traditional mad scene in the romantic vein of Donizetti. Like Lucia di Lammermoor, Katya withdraws right before the dénouement into a fantasy world represented by the dulcet music of an accompanying flute. But no sooner is the comparison made than it turns ironic. The romantic mad scene in bel canto operas was always their most ornately "musical" moment. Dementia was depicted, and its fascination conveyed, through lavish ornamentation and roulades.

Meanwhile, it would be difficult to imagine music more starkly denuded than the mad scene in Janáček's opera. The vocal writing is straight syllabic declamation, as sedulously modeled on speech as ever. The bird song consists of a typical ostinato phrase, repeated like an obsession but never embellished or even varied, except to distend it by the use of dissonant skips. It is accompanied by a harsh percussive tattoo drawn from the notes of the Volga's "sigh." This demonstratively stripped-down, barren sonority is the nub of Janáček's maximalism. What is maximalized is laconicism, "plain speech" deliberately void of "poetry" in the name of "unvarnished truth"—the realist or naturalist strain in nineteenth-century literature and literature-influenced music brought to a peak (or perhaps one should say a nadir). All during his astonishingly fertile final decade, Janáček was becoming increasingly obsessed with spareness, and with a bluffness of expression that was virtually without precedent.

He began ruling his own staves rather than using manufactured music paper for his orchestral scores lest he be seduced by all those empty bars to pad his orchestration. He began deliberately flouting schoolroom rules of voice leading (rules that, unlike Musorgsky perhaps, he knew as well as any composer) to lend his music a rough-hewn or "primitive" texture. The climactic love music quoted in Ex. 7-33b is a vivid case in point: even at this tender moment the music must borrow a bit of honest clumsiness from the deliberately unprepared chord with which it begins, and from the deliberately skewed intervals (augmented second against augmented fourth in contrary motion) with which it proceeds.


Lento (♩= 63)
KATERINA
mf
Ptáč - ci při - le - tí na mo-hy - lu,
p
vy - ve - dou mlá - dă - ta
a kvít - ka vy - kve - tou, čer - ve-ňouč ká
Fl.
Cl.
mf
p
mo - drou - čká, žlu - tou - čká
Ob.
(přiží se k řece)
Tak
Vla.



ex. 7-35 Leoš Janáček, *Kát'a Kabanová*, Act III, scene 2, Katerina's suicide

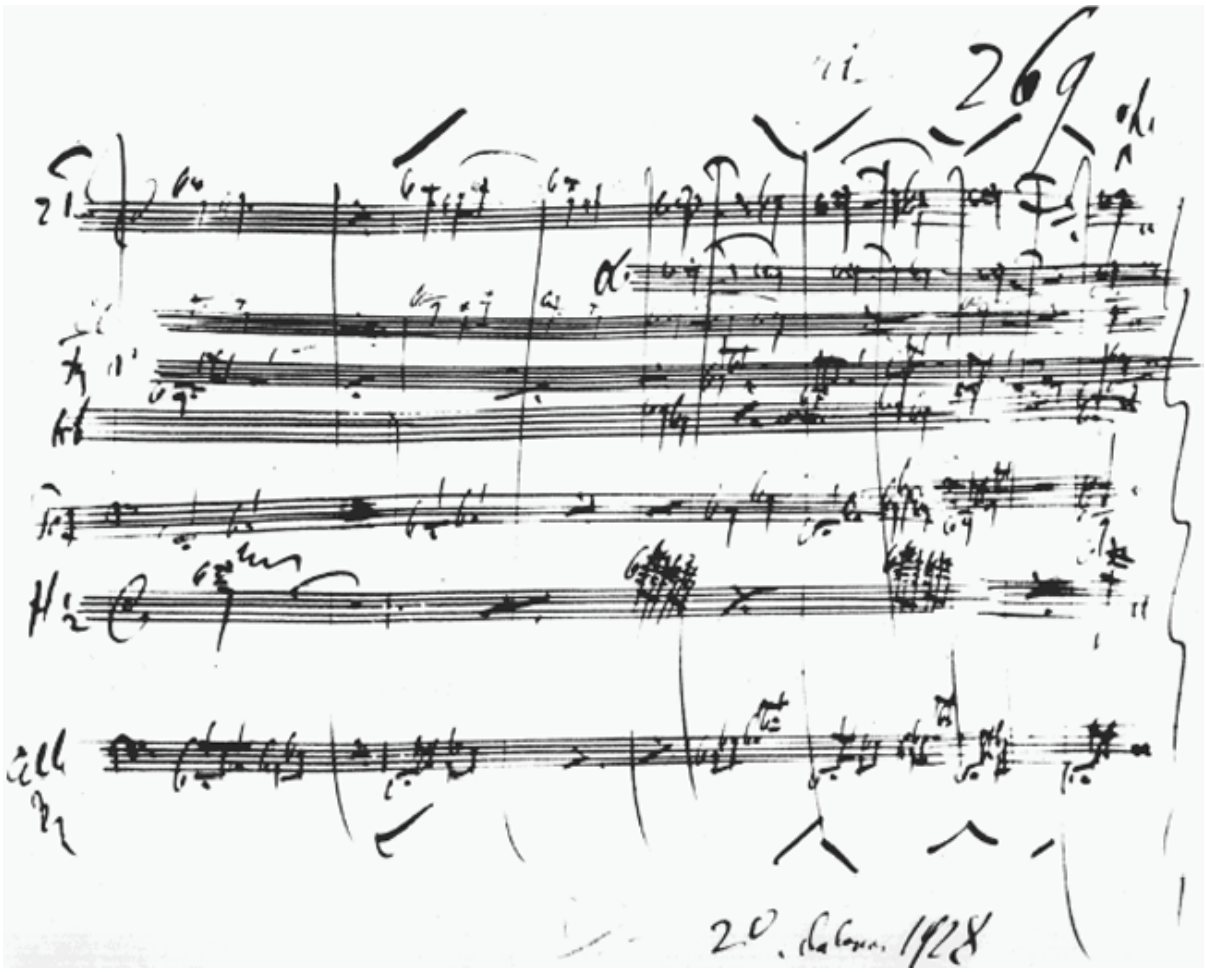
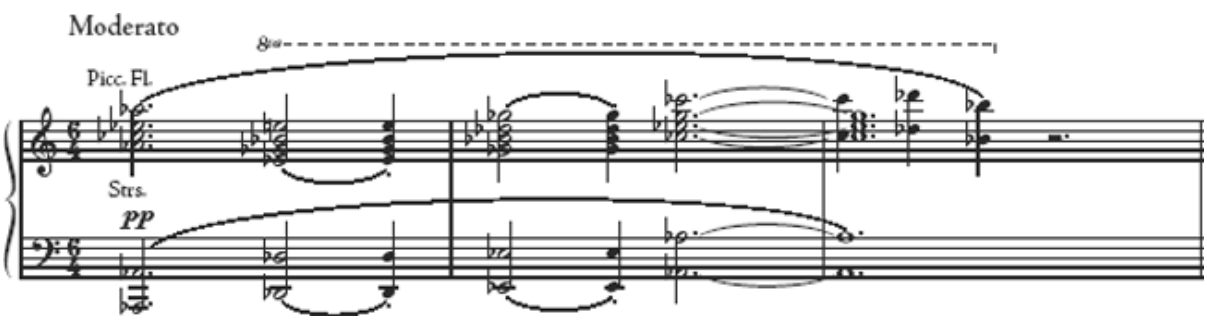
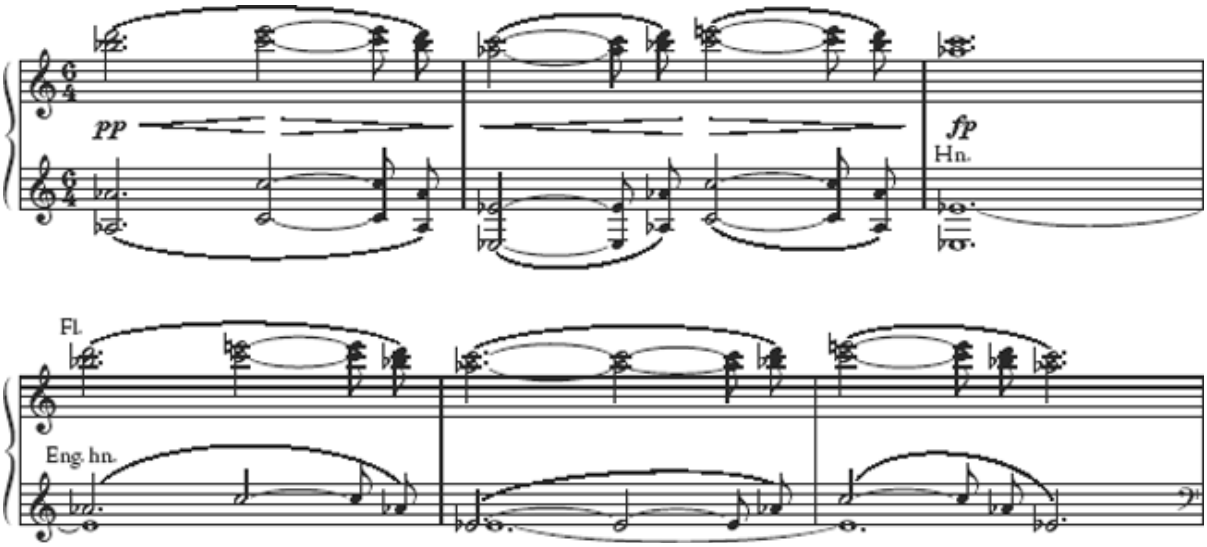


fig. 7-5 Janáček, page of the autograph manuscript for *From the House of the Dead*.

In *From the House of the Dead*, his last opera and almost his last work, Janáček brought artlessness to an extreme in his depiction of sensibilities hardened and distorted by prison life. In Ex. 7-36a, a chord is approached by leap in similar motion, and proceeds, again in inelegant similar motion, to another voicing of the same dissonant harmony. Ex. 7-36b is an ostinato that accompanies one prisoner's rueful narration of the brutal crime for which he was sentenced. An unprepared chord ascends in similar motion to the next harmony without resolving its dissonance, and descends, also in similar motion and without resolution, to a chord that is supposed to mark the cadence (not to be confused, of course, with a "cadential "). On its repetition the ostinato is accompanied by an ersatz "tonic pedal" on E≠ that jars wretchedly with the soprano E.



ex. 7-36a Leos Janáček, *From the House of the Dead*, Act III, 6 before fig. [15]



ex. 7-36b Leoš Janáček, *From the House of the Dead*, Act III, ostinato at fig. [26]

Both in Ex. 7-36b and at various points in the final scene from *Kát'a Kabanová*, the harmony is tinged with whole-tone effects. Janáček was attracted to Debussy's music and studied *Pelléas et Mélisande*, which as an essay in prose-setting especially interested him. Nevertheless, his whole-tone usages seem more indebted, yet again, to Russian music, where, in the wake of Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmila* the whole-tone scale was usually associated, as it is in Janáček, with evil or horror. Rather than cooling the emotional temperature, as whole-tone harmony did for Debussy, it remained for Janáček, as it had been for the Russians, an emotional stimulant.

Notes:

(28) Tyrrell, *Leoš Janáček: Kat'a Kabanová* (Cambridge Opera Handbooks; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 13.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Janácek: Posthumous reputation
Bartók: Interpretation and analysis

RESEARCH VS. COMMUNICATION

Chapter: CHAPTER 7 Social Validation
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

But then so was everything in Janáček. His music, however novel its ways and means, always avidly sought popular appeal, and the composer measured his success in terms of his popularity. His role model, he was unabashed to admit, was Puccini. (Indeed, few commentators have failed to notice that the title character's first entrance in act I of *Kát'a Kabanová*, not yet singing but accompanied by her soaring leitmotif, directly parallels the analogous moment in *Madama Butterfly*.) Despite Adorno's wishful attempt at "co-opting" him, alienation simply was not this composer's bag. He was as enthusiastic a communitarian as a modernist could be. As a result, his historical prestige has suffered. Many twentieth-century histories of twentieth-century music omit him altogether, or write him off in spite of everything as an insignificant regionalist. Janáček made his comeback into history during the 1950s, when he was rediscovered (first in England) not in the classroom but in the opera house, largely thanks to the efforts of Charles Mackerras (b. 1925), a conductor who had studied in Prague with Václav Talich (1883–1961), Czechoslovakia's outstanding orchestra director.

Prestige attaches itself more readily to the esoteric than to the popular. It has been the lonely modernist's chief consolation, and it has been as avidly sought by some as social acceptance has been sought by others. One cannot imagine Janáček setting up a Society for Private Performances or writing a fawning letter to a potential aristocratic patron lauding "the fairest, alas bygone, days of art when a prince stood as a protector before an artist, showing the rabble that art, a matter for princes, is beyond the judgement of common people."[29] That is what Schoenberg wrote, in 1924, to Prince Egon Fürstenberg, the bankroller of a contemporary music festival in the South German town of Donaueschingen. The attitude it encapsulates is the one to which the term "elite"—or, more balefully, "elitist"—is now often applied. It regards art as both the product of elite circumstances and the creator of elite occasions.

The dichotomy between the elitist model epitomized by Schoenberg and the populist model epitomized (practically alone among modernists) by Janáček has been perhaps the most contentious issue in twentieth-century music and musical politics. Few composers have been as single-mindedly committed to an extreme position as have these two. Most have been ambivalent, susceptible to both pulls. Bartók was one. The thrust of this chapter has perhaps too easily suggested a grouping of Bartók with Janáček against the Vienna Schoenberg circle, the one group associated with the spirit of particularism as against the other's universalism, or with the provinces as against the capital, or with the cause of vulnerable national minorities as against the tyranny of the powerful cosmopolitan majority. The ivory tower might seem the "natural" prerogative of one group, social validation the "natural" requirement of the second.

But Bartók was torn, like all educated Magyars, both between the universal and the particular and between the elite and the popular. He could be contrasted with Janáček as easily as with Schoenberg, depending on the vantage point from which we choose to view him. Like Janáček but unlike Schoenberg, he sought inspiration in folklore. But like Schoenberg and unlike Janáček, he felt the urge to generalize and systematize his innovations. Like Janáček but unlike Schoenberg, he claimed simplicity as a virtue. But like Schoenberg and unlike Janáček, he saw virtue as well in abstraction, which led him, at times, to write music not easily followed by nonprofessional audiences. His music, too, creates elite occasions, and he knew it. He once discouraged a correspondent from performing some of his more difficult works "in places where the

level of music is like that of the provincial towns of Hungary," since they "will merely deter listeners who do not have the necessary level of preparation."[30] He was well aware that he was appropriating from "simple" people the basis for an art that excluded them, and at times it troubled his conscience. For all his fascination with symmetry, this was an asymmetry he could not reconcile.

Placing Bartók and Janáček in opposition usefully shifts the ground of contention a little from its usual terrain. A composition like Bartók's Fourth Quartet, with its systematically worked out symmetrical schemes and not always obviously expressive (therefore "alienating") dissonance, implicitly upholds a model of composition driven as much by "research" as by the urge to communicate. The research model implies further an emphasis on the making of the artwork rather than on its effect, and, ultimately, an emphasis on the rights of the autonomous creative individual rather than those of the receiving community. Observing all of this in Bartók, we are observing it within the "camp" identified, in broadest and crudest terms, as the "socially committed" one. And that should suffice to show how uselessly broad and crude such terms can be.

Notes:

(29) Arnold Schoenberg to Prince Egon Fürstenberg, April 1924; *Arnold Schoenberg's Letters*, ed. Erwin Stein, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), p. 108.

(30) Béla Bartók to Jenö Takács, 31 December 1925; Béla Bartók, *Letters*, ed. János Demény (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1971), p. 168.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

CHAPTER 8 Pathos Is Banned

Stravinsky and Neoclassicism

Chapter: CHAPTER 8 Pathos Is Banned
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

THE "REAL" TWENTIETH CENTURY BEGINS

On the evening of 18 October 1923, Aaron Copland, an American then finishing up a two-year stint as a composition student in Paris and about to turn twenty-three, happened in on a concert at which the latest work by Igor Stravinsky was to have its premiere. For thirteen years, since the unveiling of the *Firebird* ballet, and especially since the scandalous opening night of *The Rite of Spring* in 1913, Stravinsky's name had been synonymous with "savage" Russian (read: semi-Asiatic) maximalism at its most exotic, obstreperous, even orgiastic. It had been only four months since the first performance of a new ballet, *Svadebka* ("The peasant wedding," presented in Paris as *Les noces villageoises*), seemingly a starker, lither version of *The Rite*, in which the dancers were accompanied by vocal soloists and a chorus singing, sometimes shouting, fierce or bawdy ritual songs whose texts had been collected by folklorists, accompanied by a clangorous "orchestra" consisting of nothing but four pianos and a monster assemblage of percussion.

Like everyone else present that October night in Paris, Copland was in for a shock. Almost twenty years later, still marveling at it, he recalled "the general feeling of mystification that followed the initial hearing", of the new work, an octet for winds (flute, clarinet, and pairs of bassoons, trumpets, and trombones). "Here was Stravinsky," he wrote,

> having created a neoprimitive style all his own, based on native Russian sources —a style that everyone agreed was the most original in modern music—now suddenly, without any seeming explanation, making an about-face and presenting a piece to the public that bore no conceivable resemblance to the individual style with which he had hitherto been identified. Everyone was asking why Stravinsky should have exchanged his Russian heritage for what looked very much like a mess of eighteenth century mannerisms. The whole thing seemed like a bad joke that left an unpleasant aftereffect and gained Stravinsky the unanimous disapproval of the press.[1]

And yet, looking back in 1941, Copland could report an even bigger surprise:

> No one could possibly have foreseen, first, that Stravinsky was to persist in this new manner of his or, second, that the *Octet* was destined to influence composers all over the world in bringing the latent objectivity of modern music to full consciousness by frankly adopting the ideals, forms, and textures of the preromantic era.[2]

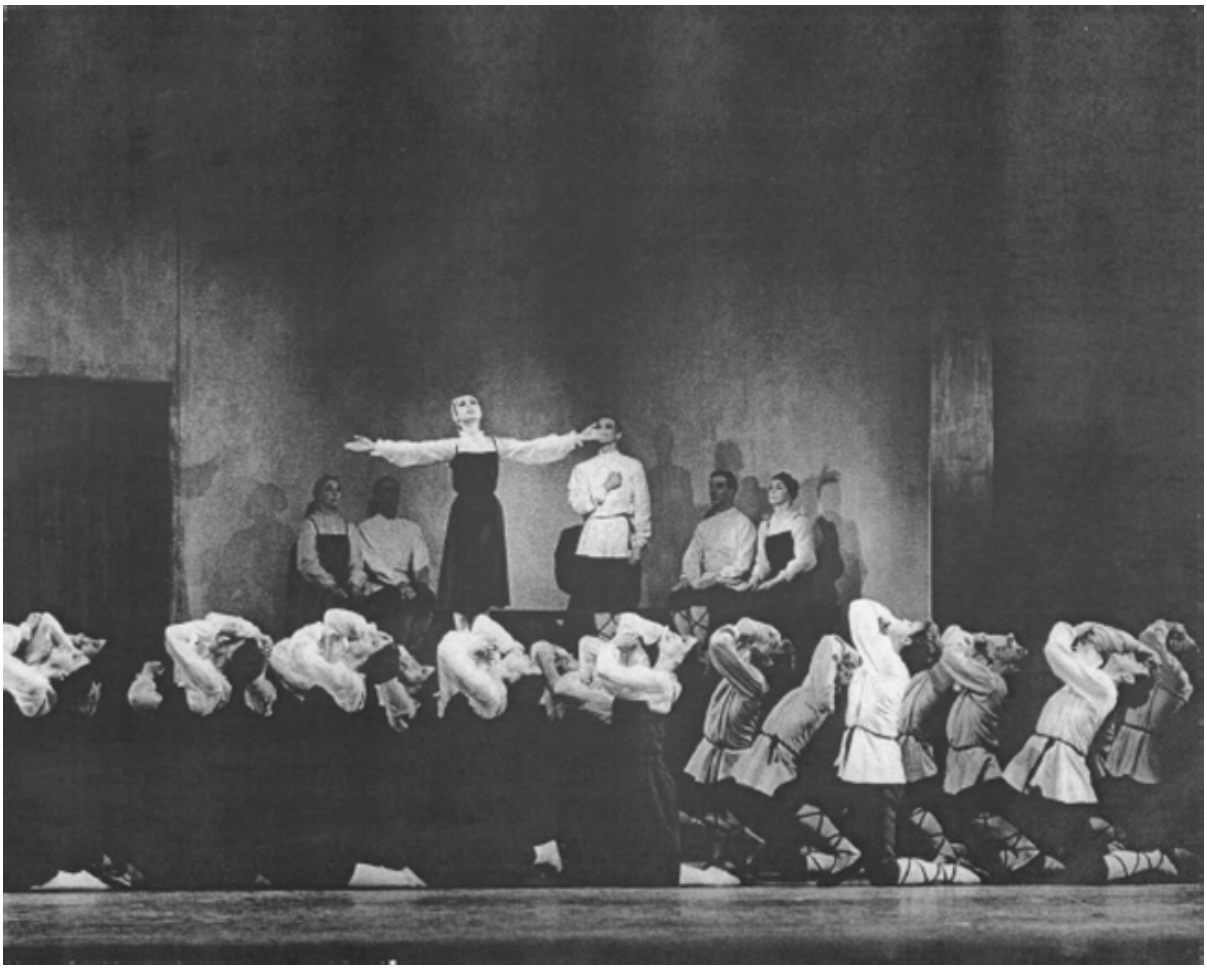


fig. 8-1 Stravinsky, *Svadebka* (*Les Noces*), Royal Ballet, London.

Indeed Copland, although he did not know it yet, was seeing his own future. Stravinsky's Octet seemed to usher in a new creative period, not only for Stravinsky but for European and Euro-American "art music" generally. It is commonly called Stravinsky's neoclassical phase; and though like most catchphrases it will require a lot of qualification and amendment, it contains enough truth to make it useful. Moreover, as Copland could already see in 1941, and as we can see much more easily now, while Stravinsky's huge prestige made his sudden recourse to "eighteenth-century mannerisms" a more newsworthy event than anybody else's could have been at the time, the move as such was far from unprecedented, either within Stravinsky's own work or in the wider world of music. The musical manifestations, meanwhile, were symptoms in turn of a pronounced general swerve in the arts that reflected a yet greater one in the wider world of expressive culture.

The history of twentieth-century music as something esthetically distinct from that of the nineteenth century begins not at the fin de siècle, then, but here, in the 1920s. As with anything so big and brusque and sweeping, we will have to funnel in on it, returning to Stravinsky's Octet, and to some other bearers of the new esthetic wind, only after we have taken some account of the wider cultural terrain. Copland's evaluation of the Octet can serve as our guide to the issues, though. He associates the new manner with "objectivity," and with the deliberate adoption of a "preromantic" stance, announced externally by the unexpected resurrection of "eighteenth-century mannerisms." In the Octet, in short, three separate (or at least separable) tendencies in the culture of the early twentieth century suddenly came together in a "crux"—a compelling cluster or knot. Our first task will be to unpack it.

Notes:

(1) Aaron Copland, *The New Music 1900/60* (London: Macdonald, 1968), p. 72.

(2) *Ibid*.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online

Neo-classicism

Claude Le Jeune

Mignon

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky

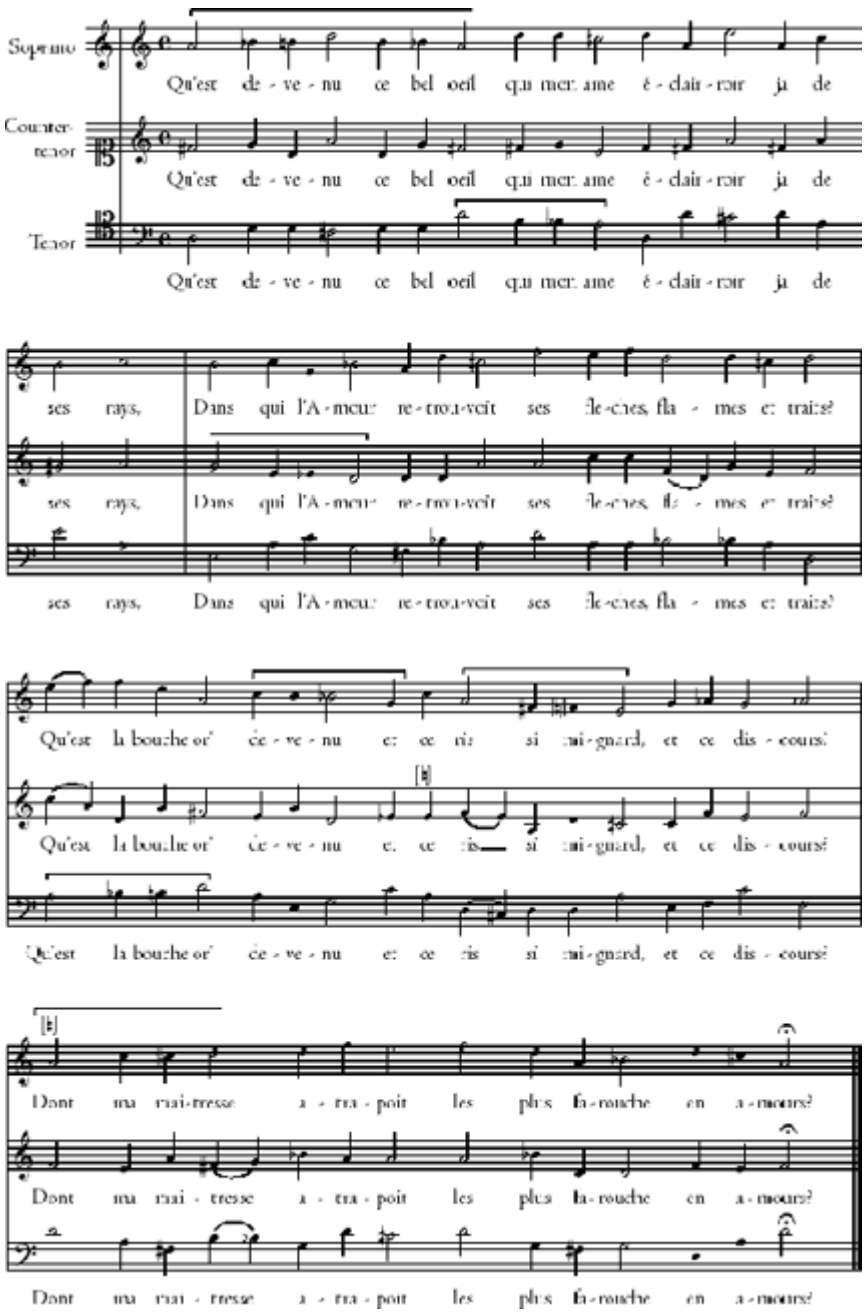
PASTICHE AS METAPHOR

Chapter: CHAPTER 8 Pathos Is Banned
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

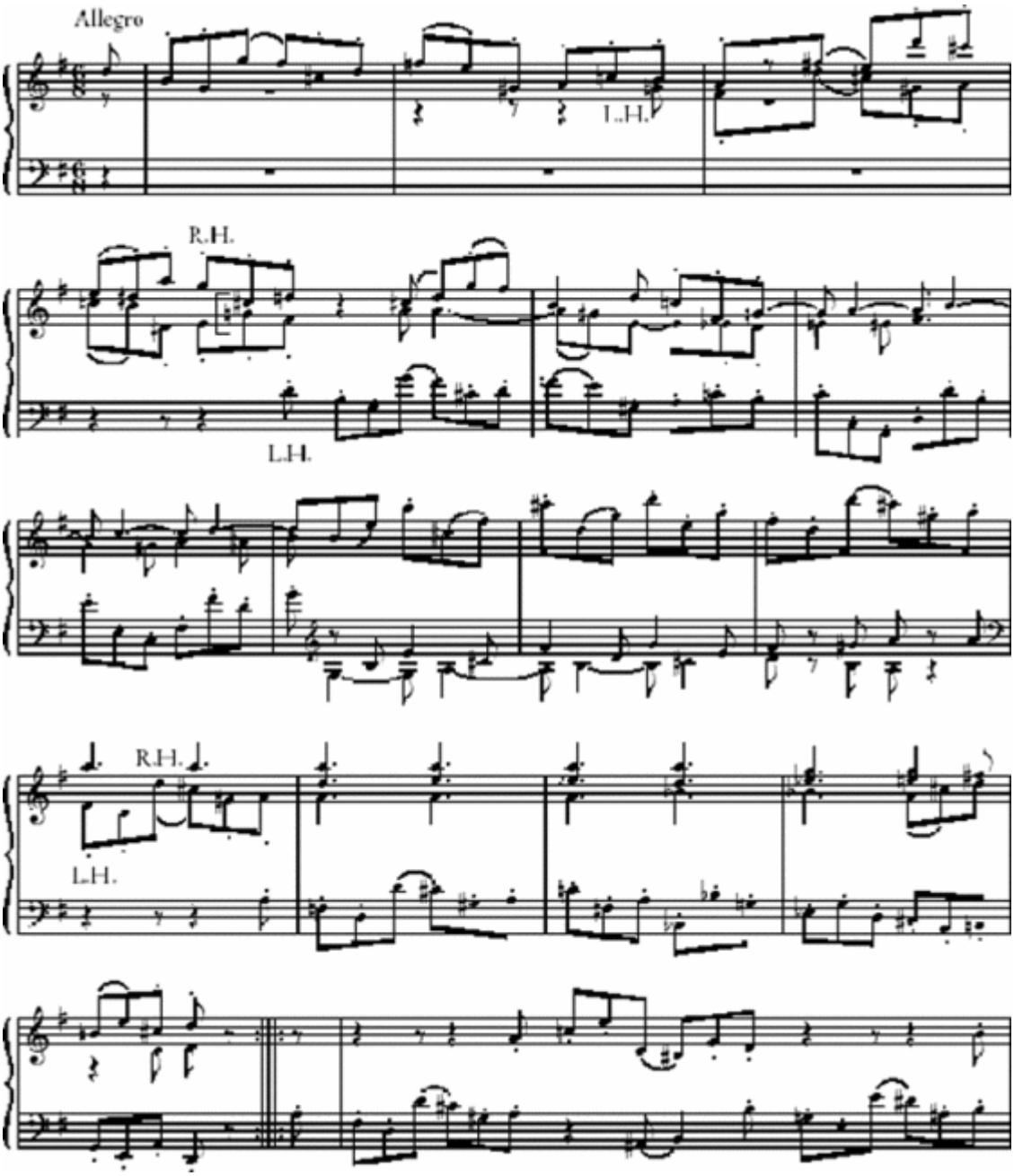
The feature of the Octet that most forcibly impressed early listeners (especially composer-listeners) like Copland—namely the "pastiche" element that impressed him as a "mess of eighteenth-century mannerisms"—was actually its least distinctive or necessary aspect, however useful it was as an attention-grabber, and however durable it has proved as a superficial mark of "neoclassicism." The deliberate imitation or revival of "ancient" or obsolete musical styles for specific emblematic or expressive purposes has a history that goes back at least as far as the Renaissance. Opera was born out of one such revival, associated with the northern Italian academies of the late sixteenth century.

An even more literal attempt to revive ancient music was *musique mesurée à l'antique*, a music rhythmicized according to the meters of ancient Greek poetry, through which musicians who shared the aims of the French poet Jean-Antoine de Baïf (1532–89), or who belonged to his Académie de Poésie et Musique, tried to duplicate the feats of what the Greeks called *ethos*, the direct influence of music on morals and behavior. Ex. 8-1, by Claude Le Jeune (d. 1600), set to a *vers mesuré* by Baïf himself, not only imitates the Greek quantitative meter but also adopts the "chromatic tetrachord" (half step, half step, minor third) as described by the theorist Aristoxenus in the fourth century bce.

The result may not be authentic Greek music; in fact, with its triadic harmony and conventional "Renaissance" counterpoint, we can be sure that it bears no stylistic resemblance at all to any ancient original. But, like Stravinsky's Octet as described by Copland (which neither he nor anyone else ever confused with actual eighteenth-century music), it also bore scant resemblance to the styles listeners at the time regarded as normal for contemporary music. A listener unaware of Le Jeune's expressive or "ethical" purpose would have been in the same predicament Copland was in when confronting Stravinsky's Octet. It would have produced (indeed, was in part designed to produce) mystification.



ex. 8-1 Claude Le Jeune, *Qu'est devenue ce bel oeil* (Le printemps, no. XXX)



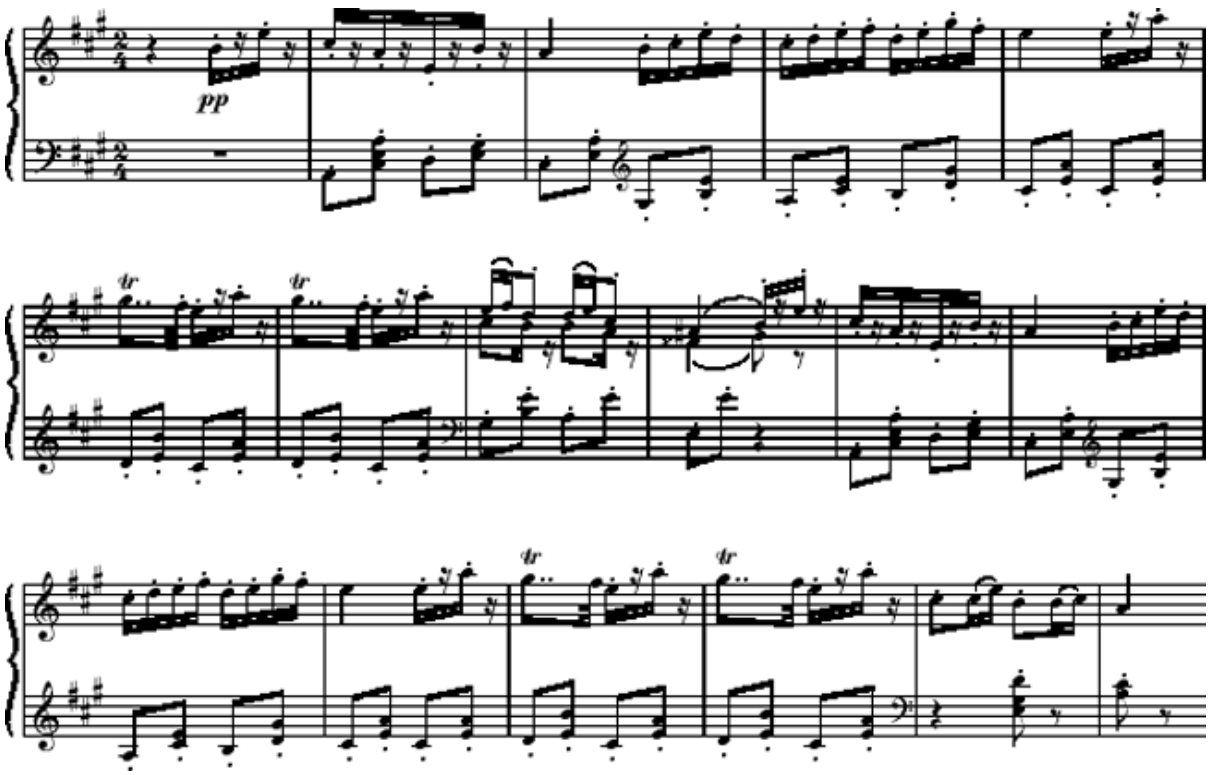
ex. 8-2 W. A. Mozart, Gigue for piano, K. 574

By the late eighteenth century, composers had a sufficiently historical or "modern" sense of changing musical fashion to enjoy stylistic pastiche as a form of exoticism. Mozart may have been the earliest composer to write what might be called "epicurean" or "gourmet" parodies of outmoded styles, notably those of Bach and Handel, whose music he discovered late in life at the Viennese salon of Baron van Swieten: yet another reason for attributing to Mozart the earliest truly "modern" (or even modernist) musical sensibility. Whereas Haydn discovered Handel as the national composer of England during his visit of 1795, and imitated his grandiose oratorio style in *The Creation* (Die Schöpfung) and *The Seasons* (Die Jahreszeiten) for purposes of religious edification, Mozart composed a keyboard suite in the style of Handel (K. 399) as early as 1782, for no other purpose than sensory delectation—aural "deliciousness." Mozart also wrote imitation "Baroque" music for ritual use, especially in his Masonic cantatas and his Requiem, and echoed it parodistically in the last act of *The Magic Flute*, which contains a little chorale setting that mimics the style of Bach's then very little known church cantatas. One of his best known pastiches is a Gigue, K. 574 (Ex. 8-2), that (to keep up the culinary metaphor) adds a maximum of chromatic spice to the Bach-Handel recipe.

"Delicious" neoclassicism begins with Mozart, then, and continues thereafter in an unbroken, albeit minor, stream. Simply as pastiche, Stravinsky's Octet was part of that stream. And if pastiche were all that it was, it would never have had the major influence that Copland rightly attributed to it, no matter how formidable the composer's prestige. For "delicious" pastiche or stylistic parody was by then a part of every concertgoer's experience. In certain contexts, imitation eighteenth-century music had even become something of a nineteenth-century specialty.

The chief context, easily guessed, was the theater, where the setting could call for it. One of the most popular *morceaux de concert* (concert pieces—"morsels"—extracted from operas or ballets) in the late-nineteenth-century orchestral repertory was the entr'acte or curtain music before the second act of *Mignon*, an opéra comique by Ambroise Thomas (1811–96), the very respectable director of the Paris Conservatory. An adaptation of a novel by Goethe (*Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* or "The Education of Wilhelm Meister") that is set in the late eighteenth century, the opera concerns the adventures, mainly amorous, of a stage-struck youth who falls in with a troupe of traveling players.

The entr'acte (Ex. 8-3) is in the form of a gavotte, a sprightly court dance of the seventeenth or early eighteenth century with a distinctive upbeat figure, known to nineteenth-century musicians primarily thanks to its presence in many of Bach's instrumental suites. Thomas's gavotte precedes, and sets the tone for, a boudoir scene that was considered very risqué. After the entr'acte had become popular in its own right, Thomas interpolated into the scene a "rondo-gavotte" (*Me voici dans son boudoir / Et je sens mon coeur battre d'espoir*, or "Here I am in her boudoir, and I feel my heart beating with hope") based on its familiar strains. The character who sings it, moreover, was recast from a tenor to a boyish contralto "in trousers" to make the part, the situation, and the music seem even sexier by virtue of androgyny.



ex. 8-3 Ambroise Thomas, *Mignon*, Entr'acte to Act II, mm. 9–25

"Delicious" here takes on a new connotation, now covering any sort of sensual delight. And "the eighteenth century," invoked by countless nineteenth-century writers and playwrights as a time at once of sybaritic innocence and of aristocratic guile, became a sort of fairyland or sexual playground, no different in principle from the romantically imagined "Orient." That sexualized eighteenth century found a new metaphorical referent in "period" music harmonized and orchestrated as flavorsomely as possible, not at all for the sake of

stylistic authenticity, but for the sake of that metaphorical resonance with sensuality.

This strain of fake eighteenth-century music as soft-core nineteenth-century pornography reached its maximalist phase in a pair of operas by Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal. They followed directly on the same team's *Elektra* and are often viewed by historians as an unfortunate stylistic retreat from the composer's far out point. In the first of them, *Der Rosenkavalier* ("The cavalier of the rose", 1911), the curtain goes up on a pair of naked women in bed (one of them a "boy," but without his trousers). The title of the second, *Ariadne auf Naxos* ("Ariadne on the Isle of Naxos", 1912, rev. 1916), deliberately evokes one of the most distinguished libretto traditions of the old mythological *opera seria*, one that went all the way back to Monteverdi and included works by Handel, Galuppi, Sarti, and Riccardo Broschi, the brother of Farinelli, the great castrato.

Strauss's *Ariadne* began life as a musical play-within-a-play to cap a revival of *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, Molière's farce about a rich status-seeker's pretensions to aristocratic manners. The deflation of an *opera seria* by a troupe of masked comedians was a metaphor for the social incongruity of Molière's comic situation. In its final, fully operatic form, Strauss's work is still an opera about operas and all their esthetic and (sometimes scandalous) social subtexts, rather than a straight dramatization of its ostensible subject.

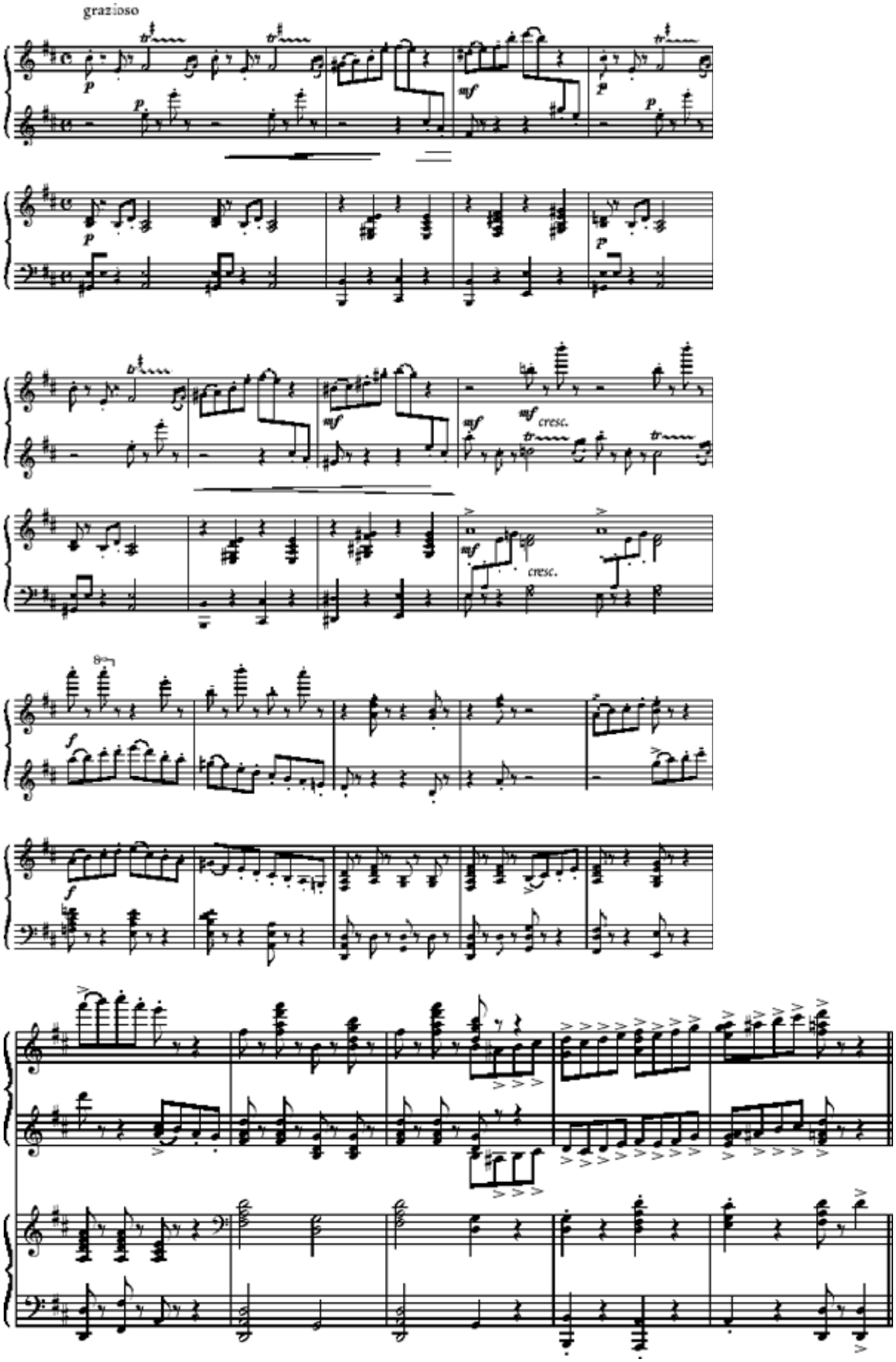
Its prologue features some backstage amorous byplay involving the pretty coloratura soprano from the comedy troupe and the ostensible composer of the *opera seria* who is cast, by now predictably, as a delicious boy-toy in trousers. So Strauss's "neoclassical" operas turn out not to have been such a retreat after all. Their social and sexual conceits are even more "avant-garde" than the ones in Strauss's earlier, stylistically sensational operas (in which upsetters of social or sexual proprieties are duly punished), and the eighteenth-century stylistic veneer is an integral part of their "decadence," masking or excusing an otherwise socially unacceptable (if aristocratic) "libertinage." Meanwhile, the nineteenth-century eighteenth-century pastiche had ridden the coattails of *morceaux de concert* like Thomas's, or of operatic and ballet suites and divertissements, to an independent status as nineteenth-century instrumental music. The independent keyboard or orchestral suite, unattached to a theatrical source or prototype, became its main vehicle. Originally modeled on the Bach keyboard and (especially) orchestral suites, some of which were published for the first time in the Bach-Gesellschaft (Bach Society) edition beginning in Bach's centennial year of 1850, the genre spread far and wide and even had its specialist composers.

One of the earliest such pieces was a Suite for piano, op. 38 (1855), by the Russian piano virtuoso Anton Rubinstein. It had ten movements: Prelude, Minuet, Gigue, Sarabande, Gavotte, Passacaille, Allemande, Courante, Passepied, Bourrée. But even if the Bach keyboard suites were Rubinstein's obvious model, what he actually produced was not an imitation Bach keyboard suite. For one thing, it was an encyclopedic compendium that did not follow its Prelude with the normal sequence of dances that Rubinstein knew perfectly well from the actual suites of Bach. And for another, much more important, thing, the cultivation of an "olden style" had always prompted, *and was meant to prompt*, a great deal of chromatic or quasi-"modal" harmonic *piquanterie* that was as plainly anachronistic to its practitioners as it is to us now, just as the "folk" or "oriental" styles of the time were knowing, sophisticated inventions whose credentials did not at all depend on their authenticity. In all cases it was the pretext for modern harmonic, melodic, and (in the case of orchestral music) timbral invention that justified pastiche and cinched its popularity with audiences.

The earliest specialist composers of orchestral suites were Germans: the long-lived Franz Lachner (1803–90), who in his youth had been a friend of Schubert's, and Joachim Raff (1822–82), who had been a pupil and disciple of Liszt (and had his earliest experience with the orchestra as the ghost-orchestrator of Liszt's early symphonic poems). Between them, Lachner and Raff wrote eleven orchestral suites between 1861 and 1881. Next in line was the Frenchman Jules Massenet (1842–1912), who in his more usual guise of opera composer wrote an Ariadne opera packed even fuller of eighteenth-century parodies than Thomas's *Mignon*. Between 1865 and 1881 Massenet composed seven *suites caractéristiques* for orchestra, less concerned with the archaic sort of "stylization" than with the exotic (*Scènes hongroises*, 1871; *Scènes napolitaines*, 1876; *Scènes alsaciennes*, 1881). He did write at least one conspicuous bit of fake old music, however: a curiously titled *Sarabande du XVIe siècle* ("A sarabande of the sixteenth century"), somewhat overshooting the mark, in 1875

In that same year Pyotr Chaikovsky, Rubinstein's most famous pupil and a composer with whom Stravinsky would later avidly claim kinship, wrote the first of his four orchestral suites. It contains two "neobaroque" movements: an opening *Introduzione e fuga* avowedly "in Lachner's manner"[3] (five of Lachner's seven suites having fugues, not usually regarded as much of a nineteenth-century genre, as either first movement or finale), and a concluding Gavotte (Ex. 8-4), recognizable as such from its kinship with Thomas's famous rondo-gavotte, even if it does not have the characteristic two-quarter pickup that was the actual eighteenth-century gavotte's most distinctive feature. It ends with a blazing reprise of the fugue subject from the first movement, a mixture of genres that could never have occurred in the eighteenth century, but which epitomizes the "culinary" aspect of nineteenth-century pastiche, for which stylistic or generic traits were so many "ingredients" for subtle blends and striking juxtapositions.

Chaikovsky's Fourth Suite, op. 61 (1887), brought things full circle. Subtitled *Mozartiana*, it consisted of orchestrations of four items by Mozart (one of them, the sacred chorus *Ave verum corpus*, K. 618, mediated through Liszt's keyboard transcription). The opening movement is none other than the Gigue for piano, quoted in Ex. 8-2, which was already a pastiche. Chaikovsky's orchestral treatment, which matched the *piquanterie* of Mozart's own harmonization, was a compliment from one master chef to another, and a commemoration of a Mozart (rather different from the one normally worshipped by the romantics) who shared Chaikovsky's taste and gift for delectable, often retrospective parody.



ex. 8-4 Pyotr Ilyich Chaikovsky, Gavotte from Suite no. 1, mm. 35–54

In its way, Chaikovsky's *Mozartiana* was a harbinger of the so-called silver age of Russian culture, a massive resurgence of aristocratic taste that began in the 1890s and lasted until the 1917 revolution. It valued above all what was fantastic, decorative, and life-(or lifestyle-)enhancing in art, rather than what was personally expressive or "sincere" or "true to life" (those ideals being the vulgar hallmarks of the bourgeoisie). For all of this, too, an assumed eighteenth-century style (what Russian artists then called the "Versailles" style) was the prime esthetic metaphor. Russia was its natural home because Russia, as the last surviving autocratic or "absolutist" empire in Europe, was in effect the last great eighteenth-century state. The Russian silver age was in effect the last great flowering of European court art.

Chaikovsky's major contributions to the Versailles style (or "Imperial" style, as cultural historians call it now) were his next-to-last opera and his next-to-last ballet, both performed for the first time in 1890. The opera, *Pikovaya dama* ("The queen of spades"), was a fantastic, surrealistic retelling of a famous ghost story by Pushkin, in which the setting was deliberately pushed back to the eighteenth century to enable the composer to write a pastiche divertissement. (One of its ingredients, a Sarabande in a deliberately "incorrect" four-quarter time, combined both metaphors—the delectable and the disquietingly unreal—in a single ironic gesture.) The ballet, *Spyashchaya krasavitsa* ("The sleeping beauty"), was based on a "Mother Goose" tale by the French fabulist Charles Perrault (1628–1703), an authentic "Versailles" author, and set a standard for opulence and sensuous beauty that Sergey Diaghilev, the Russian impresario who first presented Stravinsky to an astonished Paris, strove all his life to equal.

Notes:

(3) Chaikovsky to Nadezhda von Meck, 25 August 1878; P. I. Chaikovsky, *Perepiska s N. F. fon-Mekk*, Vol. I (Moscow: Academia, 1934), p. 421.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online

Arnold Schoenberg

Engelbert Humperdinck

Sprechstimme

CRACKING (JOKES) UNDER STRESS

Chapter: CHAPTER 8 Pathos Is Banned
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Again we have come full circle, back to Stravinsky, whose pastiche Octet took Aaron Copland, and many others, by surprise in 1923. Placed against the background of early-twentieth-century maximalism, the surprise was genuine. But given the background we have just traced, it might almost seem predictable. What made it so influential just then? Or to ask the question another, possibly more suggestive way, what made it so timely? The answer lies in a tension that had been dogging maximalist or modernist art from the beginning—that is, ever since those terms have been appropriate describers of artistic aims or artistic products.

Our definition of maximalist art has emphasized the continuation of traditional aims by radically intensified means. Our definition of modernism has emphasized "high self-regard and self-consciousness" (to quote from chapter 1), and "*urbanity* in every meaning of the word from 'citified' to 'sophisticated' to 'artificial' to 'mannered.'" From the very beginning, it was obvious that the stance described by modernism was very much at variance with the "traditional" aims of art, if by tradition we mean the romantic tradition, which valued spirituality, sincerity, naturalness, spontaneity, and a host of other qualities that cannot stand the presence of irony (as anything as self-aware as modernism must imply).

This is a tension that maximalist artists had to bear. Some bore it more gracefully than others. Some, notably the French composers of Satie's and Debussy's generation, more willingly sacrificed romantic values, to the extent that their art has been described as "dehumanized." (And recall that among the works that demonstrated their dehumanizing commitment to modernism in chapter 2 were already a couple of pastiche sarabandes!) Others tried tenaciously to have it both ways: to be fully modern, but also fully spontaneous and spiritual and self-expressive. Most conspicuous among these, of course, were artists in the German tradition like Mahler—but even more so the artists, like Schoenberg and Webern, to whom the epithet "expressionist" is applied. That tension or divided consciousness was among the things that drove their art—which, as we have seen, took maximalism to the max—to its extremes.

And yet the irony inherent in modernism could not always be denied or repressed, and in at least one work of Schoenberg's it gained the upper hand. Not by accident, perhaps, that one work, *Pierrot lunaire* ("Moonstruck Pierrot", 1912), became the one work of Schoenberg's maximalist phase to achieve real popularity despite—or more likely because of—its apparent atypicality within his output. Its absence from the discussion of Schoenberg in chapter 6, which placed sole emphasis on the sincerely self-expressive and spiritualist aspects of his work, has surely been a glaring one for anyone who knows it. Now it is time to make good the omission, as the tension between the modern and the romantic approaches its crisis.

The lengthy subtitle of *Pierrot lunaire*, Schoenberg's op. 21, is worth quoting, for it is as succinct a description of this very eccentric piece as one is likely to come up with: "Thrice seven poems from Albert Giraud's *Pierrot lunaire* (translated by Otto Erich Hartleben), for a speaking voice, piano, flute (alternating piccolo), clarinet (alternating bass clarinet), violin (alternating viola) and cello." The source was a then-famous collection (published in 1884) of fifty little poems by a Belgian poet whose real surname was

Kayenbergh, all of which concern the antics of the title character, Pierrot. The proverbial whiteface clown whose persona as ever-hopeful but always disappointed lover originated as one of the masked roles in the old *commedia dell'arte*, Pierrot became a key figure of romantic pathos thanks to the legendary portrayals of the role by the great Parisian mime Jean-Baptiste-Gaspard Deburau (1796–1846).

fig. 8-2 *Pierrot Lunaire* ensemble at the first performance, 16 October 1912: left to right, K. Essberger, clarinet and bass clarinet; Jakob Malinak, violin and viola; Schoenberg; Albertine Zehme, *Sprechstimme*; Eduard Steuermann, piano; Hans Kindler, cello; H. W. de Vries, flute and piccolo.

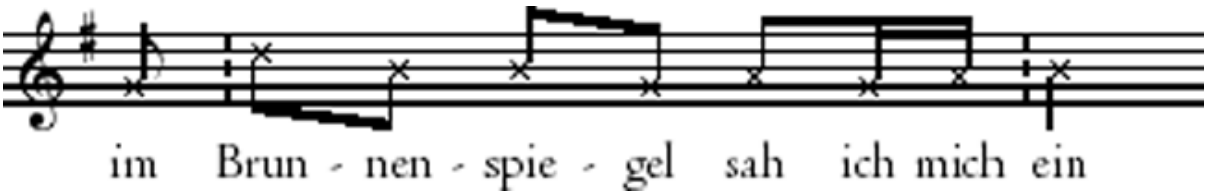
Giraud made a show of going back to a preromantic source by casting his Pierrot poems as "rondels," adapting to his purpose one of the stiffly stylized late-medieval "fixed forms." Every one of Giraud's poems has thirteen lines divided 4 + 4 + 5, of which the first and second come back as the seventh and eighth, and the first comes back again as the last. The use of this strict archaic format, as well as the focus on a masked character and his erratic doings, already recall the esthetics of ironic pastiche as briefly surveyed earlier in this chapter. Giraud's poems inhabited an odd, rather remote corner of the symbolist domain that crosscut the funny-peculiar and the funny-haha.

Schoenberg greatly increased Giraud's already considerable ironic distance by resorting to the weird device of melodrama—dramatic recitation to musical accompaniment—rather than conventional singing for his Pierrot settings. This, too, was an eighteenth-century pastiche of a sort, for that was the century in which the melodrama was invented and chiefly flourished. (The earliest use of the device on record is by the Austrian composer Johann Ernst Eberlin in 1753; the first "classic" of the genre is *Pygmalion* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, probably written in 1762.) Like many minor genres, melodrama had a specialist composer: Georg Benda (1722–95), a member of a famous Bohemian family of musicians, who worked mainly in Prussia. His first and best-known melodrama (*Ariadne auf Naxos*, as it happens) was first performed in 1775 and imitated by many composers, including Mozart.

Many German romantic operas, including standard repertory items like *Fidelio* and *Der Freischütz*, made occasional use of melodrama, so that it maintained a presence in German theaters, and especially in Vienna, long after its vogue had passed. At the very end of the nineteenth century, the period that formed the immediate background to *Pierrot lunaire*, there was a sudden flare-up of interest in it. In 1897, at his publisher's request (thus as a frankly commercial venture), Richard Strauss made a melodrama setting of—or rather, wrote a piano accompaniment to—*Enoch Arden*, a long, sentimental narrative poem by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. But several literary-minded composers, mainly German and Czech, took a more serious view of the genre's possibilities, seeing in it a means for insuring maximum realism and verbal clarity despite the presence of music.

As was typical of Germans, they saw their use of melodrama as the fulfillment of history's mandate. "Our modern opera is taking a path that *must* lead to the melodrama,"[4] wrote one of its new enthusiasts, Engelbert Humperdinck (1854–1921). "With the dominant endeavors of our time, which no one can avoid, to bring reality to the stage, one must find a form that is suitable to this trend, and in my opinion the melodrama is that form." Humperdinck is best known not for his melodramas but for his first opera, *Hänsel und Gretel* (1893), a work for children based on the famous Grimm fairytale, in which folksongs are given a very skillful Wagnerian treatment. Ever since its premiere it has been a perennial Christmas favorite in many countries. It could be that it was his willed infatuation with melodrama that prevented Humperdinck's later stage works from achieving comparable popularity.

In any case, Humperdinck's melodramas are the ones that stood closest to Schoenberg's, because he was the first to control (or at least try to control) the speaker's part by the use of a relatively full musical notation that specified both rhythm (exactly) and pitch (approximately). Previously, the words of a melodrama were simply entered above the musical staff. In eighteenth-century works (and also in Strauss's *Enoch Arden*), the recitation and the music tended to alternate, as in an "accompanied" recitative, so that there were few problems of coordination. Where the speaker recited along with continuous music, the usual objective was nothing more than to arrive at the end of the passage together. Ex. 8-5, from Humperdinck's opera *Die Königskinder* ("The king's children", 1910), shows his new method: what looks like an ordinary folklike tune, of a kind that abounds in *Hänsel und Gretel*, is notated with little *x*s in place of note-heads, turning the notes so marked into what Humperdinck called *Sprechnoten* ("speaking-notes").



ex. 8-5 Engelbert Humperdinck, *Die Königskinder*, from Act I

As the composer explained, the *Sprechnoten* "are used for the purpose of indicating the rhythm and inflection of intensified speech (the melody of the spoken verse) and for placing these passages in agreement with the accompanying music." As usually interpreted in performance, the notation directs the singer (or speaker) to aim for the notated pitch according to the notated rhythm, but immediately to begin sliding toward the next pitch, as one's voice does in normal speech. Schoenberg probably picked up the idea directly from Humperdinck; there are little passages of melodrama in Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* (on which he began work in March 1900), notated precisely according to Humperdinck's method.

In *Pierrot lunaire* the practice is characteristically (that is, "expressionistically") maximalized. Schoenberg transferred the *x*s from the note-heads to the stems, so that he could apply the technique to half notes and dotted halves. That unnatural slowing down of the tempo of the speaking voice (*Sprechstimme*), the bizarre expansion of its range by the use of enormous melodic skips, and the extreme chromaticism that replaced Humperdinck's (or the early Schoenberg's) folksiness, greatly changed the effect of the melodrama. It now connoted a kind of dementia, "tales told by an idiot, signifying nothing," expressionism ironically mocking

itself.

This perception was greatly enhanced by the accompanying chamber ensemble, modeled incongruously (but in fact very shrewdly) on the sound of a cabaret orchestra. It turned the whole sensation of *Pierrot lunaire* into one of a deranged nightclub act at the furthest (hence most ironic) remove from the churchy ivory tower environment Schoenberg's advanced music otherwise inhabited. Early performances, conducted by the composer, featured Albertine Zehme, the actress who commissioned the work and to whom it is dedicated, who declaimed the poems alone onstage under a spotlight, dressed not as Pierrot but as Columbine, the garishly beckoning *femme fatale* figure in the old masked comedy, and with the orchestra concealed behind a screen. Audiences found it titillating, and after a remarkable initial Berlin "run" to full houses, Schoenberg found himself with a relatively lucrative road show on his hands. He and Frau Zehme toured the piece for more than a decade.


Konzert-Bureau Emil Gutmann
Berlin W 35.

Dreimal sieben Gedichte
aus Albert Girauds
„Lieder des Pierrot Lunaire"
(deutsch von Otto Erich Hartleben)
für eine Sprechstimme, Klavier, Flöte (auch Pikkolo), Klarinette (auch Baßklarinette), Violine (auch Bratsche) und Violoncell
(Melodramen)
Op. 21
von
Arnold Schönberg
In drei Teilen
Rezitation: Albertine Zehme
Ensemble:
Eduard Steuermann (Klavier)
Jakob Malkin (Violine und Bratsche)
Hans Kindler (Violoncello)
Kammermusiker H. M. de Pries (Flöte und Pikkolo)
Kammervirtuose K. Essberger (Klarinette und Baßklarinette)

Aufführung für geladene Gäste
Mittwoch, den 9. Oktober, abends 8 Uhr, Choralion-Saal

Oeffentliche Uraufführung
Mittwoch, den 16. Oktober, abends 8 Uhr, Choralion-Saal

Eintrittskarten à Mark 4, 3, 2 und 1 bei Lotz & Koch, Leipziger Straße 37 und Tauentzienstraße 7, bei A. Wertheim, Leipziger Platz und Tauentzienstraße 7b, sowie abends an der Kasse.

fig. 8-3 *Pierrot Lunaire*, poster for the preview (by invitation) and the public premiere.

Its popularity caused the composer's reverent disciples some consternation. One of them, Egon Wellesz, declared himself "suspicious of people who know only *Pierrot lunaire*, and admire Schoenberg on the strength of this one work," and even a little suspicious of the single advanced composition by Schoenberg "that may have a certain effect on even an unpracticed hearer."[5] No fair enjoying dessert without eating your peas! And pay no attention to the jokes, Wellesz seems to be insisting in particular. By and large the grim literature that has grown up around the embattled figure of Schoenberg and his works has followed this advice. But the jokes are plentiful, they are often pretty good, and they constitute what was surely the timeliest and culturally most significant aspect of the score. That unanticipated popularity, suspicious or no, has something important to tell historians.

Ex. 8-6 shows the first quatrain of *Mondestrunken* ("Moondrunk"), the first in the set of twenty-one melodramas and one of Schoenberg's most famous compositions, at least in terms of the frequency with which it has been described and analyzed in print. It sets the scene for all the hallucinatory verses to come, showing the "poet" Pierrot swilling "the wine that through the eyes is drunk," that is, the moonlight that makes him rave. In the unrhymed singing translation given below, the refrain lines are set in italics to show how they return not only here but in every one of Giraud's rondels. On each recurrence their meaning is somewhat altered by the context.

- *The wine that through the eyes is drunk,*
- *at night the moon pours down in torrents,*
- until a spring-flood overflows
- the silent far horizon.

- Desires, shuddering and sweet,
- are swimming through the flood unnumbered!
- *The wine that through the eyes is drunk,*
- *at night the moon pours down in torrents.*

- The poet, whom devotion drives,
- grows tipsy on the sacred liquor,
- to heaven turning his enraptured gaze
- and reeling, sucks and slurps
- *the wine that through the eyes is drunk.*

The music is very easy to analyze, since its all-important *Grundgestalt*—the intervallic shape or "cell" that provides the melodic and harmonic raw material—is presented at the very outset in the form of an ostinato in the piano part. It may be very easily traced throughout the piece, sometimes literally repeated, sometimes varied through interpolations (piano right hand in mm. 5–6), intervallic alteration (piano right hand in m. 16) or sequences. Chords to which it directly gives rise are easily spotted (e.g., piano in m. 10).

The reason why the derivation of chords from ostinato tune is so easy is that the first five notes of the ostinato are drawn from a single whole-tone scale, to which the first note plucked on the violin also belongs, thus completing it. We may recall from the previous chapter that completion, whether of a limited set like the whole-tone scale or of the whole chromatic "aggregate," was an important criterion of coherence for Schoenberg in composing his "pantonal music." The ubiquitous "atonal triad" makes its anticipated appearances in the harmony (beginning with the piano in m. 7, second beat), and is also subtly prefigured in the ostinato. The ostinato's last two notes, C♯ and G, can either of them combine with the initial G♯ and the D that falls on the second strong beat to make atonal triads (D–G♯–C♯ or G♯–D–G).

That much is straightforward. But as soon as the voice part is reckoned into the analysis, perplexity and ambiguity prevail. Counting both the piano and the violin parts, the opening ostinato contains nine different pitches, leaving three to complete the aggregate. All three are introduced by the voice part; two of them, A and B, are the first notes the voice "sings," while the remaining note, F, is given a prominent rhythmic placement (at the beginning of m. 6), and is the longest note the voice has "sung." Schoenberg,

characteristically, is making something of a production out of the first aggregate-completion.

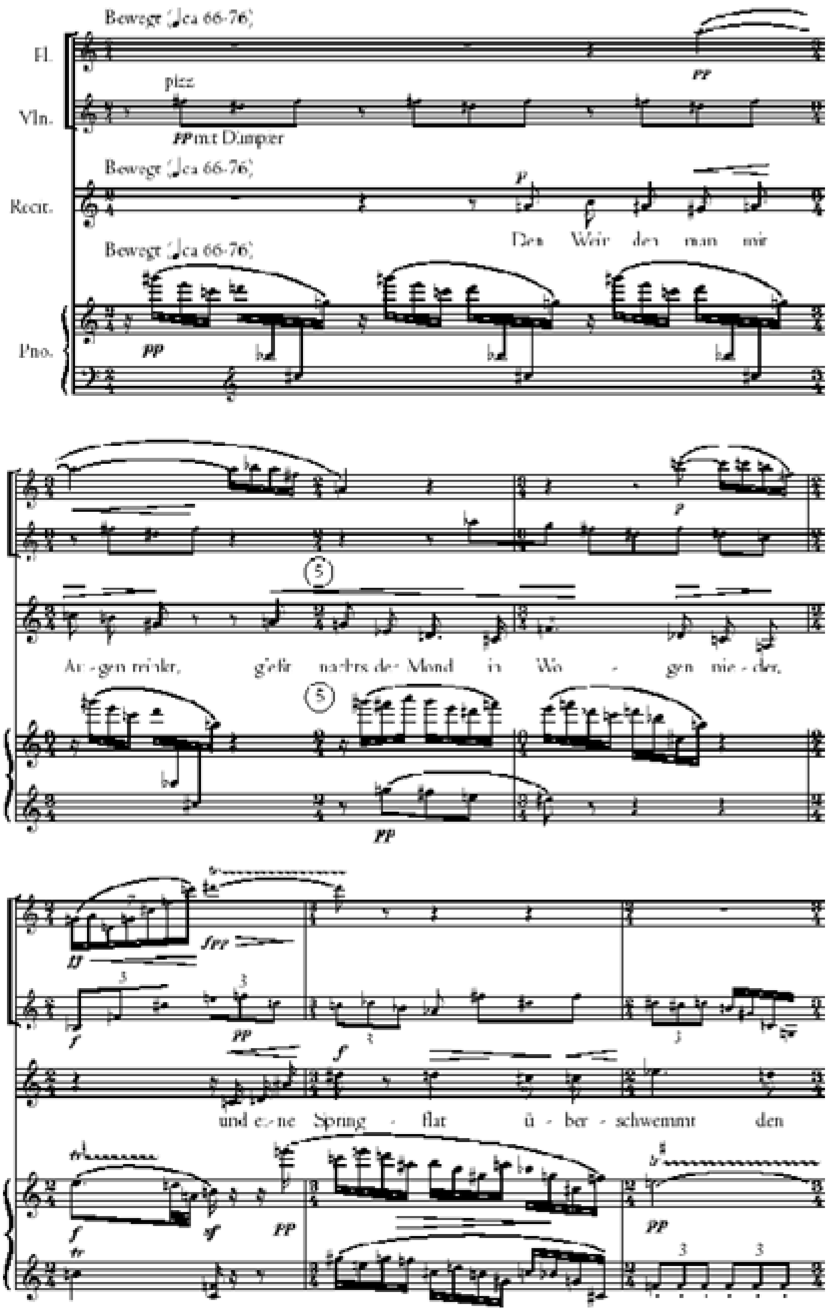
But the importance attached to the specific pitches A, B, and F is flatly contradicted by the *Sprechstimme* technique, especially considering that Frau Zehme, for whom the settings were written, was notoriously unconcerned with the niceties of pitch, and especially considering that Schoenberg claimed later that despite his fastidious notation, he neither expected nor wanted any greater exactness from the speaker. This may be confirmed by listening to a recording Schoenberg made of *Pierrot lunaire*, with a different singer, in 1940. Corroboration of another sort can be found in a later melodrama, *Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte*, for speaker, piano, and string quartet, composed in 1942. Here Schoenberg contented himself with a much cruder notation for the speaker, in which only a single staff line is used, and the notes are placed either on it, above it, or below it, to denote rough high, middle and low registers. In the preface to the score, Schoenberg claimed that this notation would have sufficed for *Pierrot* as well, and that he should have used it then to avoid misconceptions about his intention.

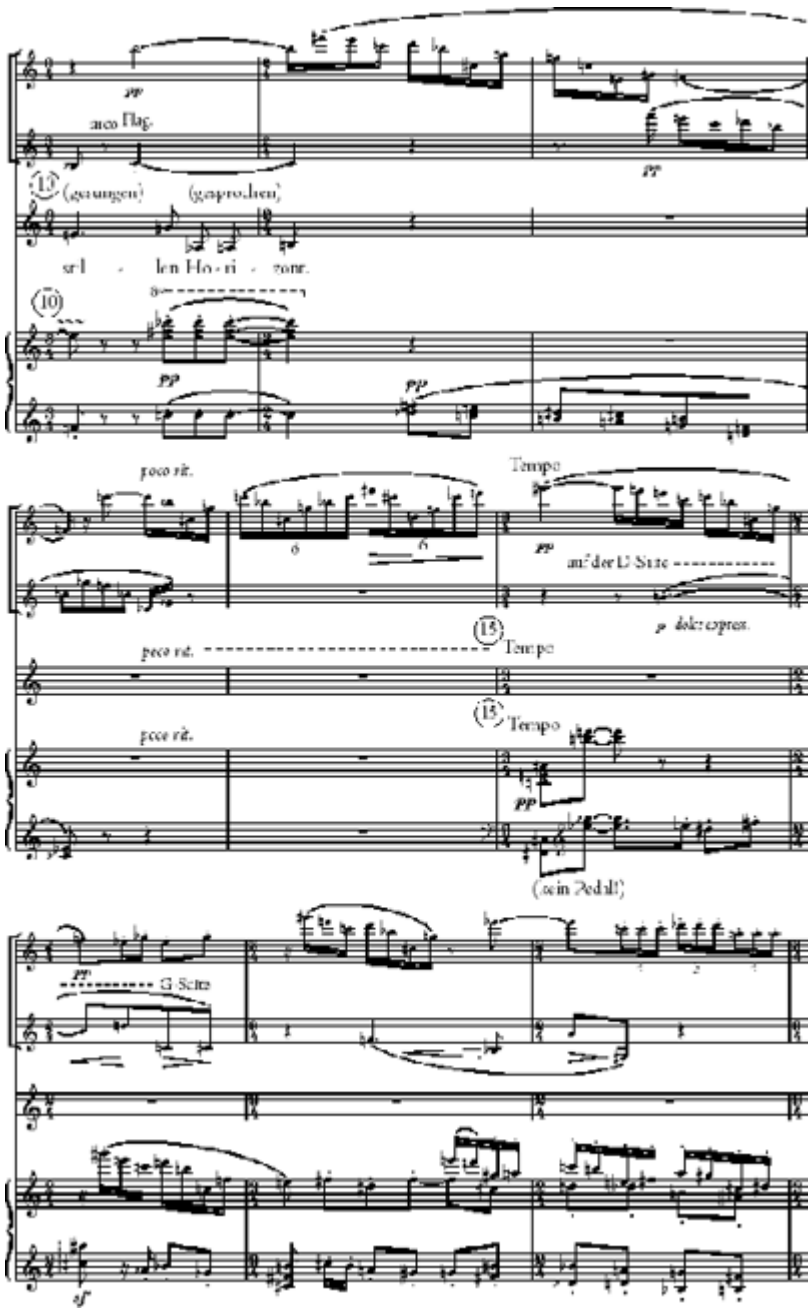
Thus a seemingly important feature of the tonal organization as represented by the score turns out to be entirely chimerical when it comes to actual sound. Schoenberg, so often meanly accused of writing mere *Papiermusik* ("on-paper music") or *Augenmusik* ("music for the eyes," not the ears), here does it on purpose and, it would seem, in jest. A much more thoroughgoing irony of this kind, and a much funnier one (in a bewildering sort of way), is found in *Der Mondfleck* ("The moonspot"), no. 18 in the cycle of twenty-one:

- *A snowy fleck of shining moonlight*
- *on the back side of his smart new frock coat,*
- so sets forth Pierrot one balmy evening,
- in pursuit of fortune and adventure.

- Sudden—something's wrong with his appearance,
- he looks round and round and then he finds it
- *—a snowy fleck of shining moonlight*
- *on the back side of his smart new frock coat.*

- Hang it! thinks he: a speck of plaster!
- Wipes and wipes, but it won't vanish!
- On he goes, his pleasure poisoned,
- rubs and rubs till almost morning at
- *a snowy fleck of shining moonlight.*


Bewegt (♩ca 66-76)
Fl.
Vln.
pizz
pp mit Dämpfer
Recit.
Pno.



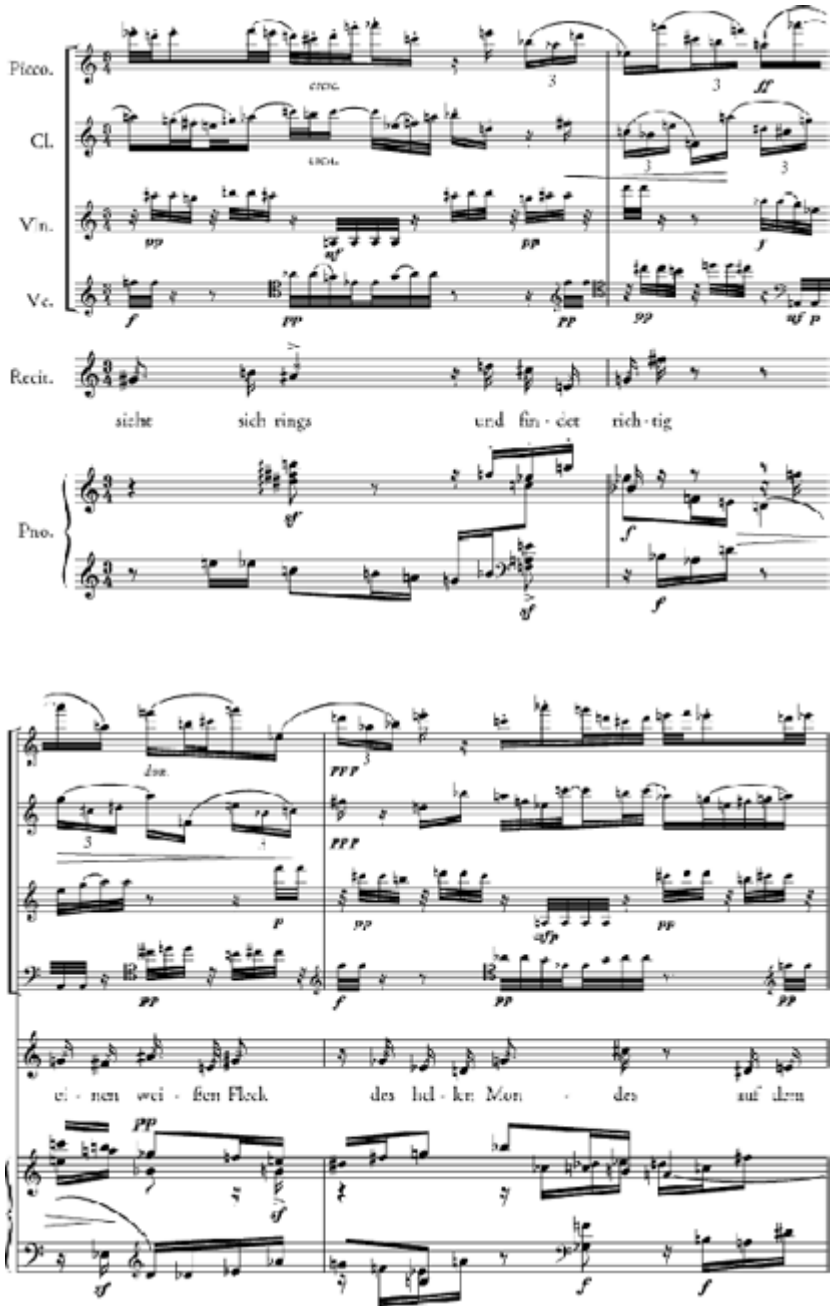
ex. 8-6 Arnold Schoenberg, *Pierrot lunaire*, no. 1, *Mondestrunken*, mm. 1–18

Now here (Ex. 8-7) is an analyst's delight: a strict canon at the octave between the violin and the cello, a freer canon (or perhaps a sort of fugue) at the twelfth between the clarinet and the piccolo, and in the piano part a harmonized version of the clarinet-piccolo canon, in doubled note-values (that is, at half the tempo), with the parts inverted, and with a third voice entering in the middle of the texture an octave below the first entry of the subject, so that the orthodox tonal relations of a fugue (E answers B answers E, or I–V–I) are scrupulously maintained. *Not only that*, but (as shown in Ex. 8-7) in the middle of m. 10 the string and wind parts reverse direction, producing a perfect melodic and rhythmic palindrome, while the piano continues to develop its fugue!

It is enough to boggle the mind, and it has elicited a lot of awestruck hyperbole, like Charles Rosen's announcement that *Der Mondfleck* "is one of the most elaborately worked out canons since the end of the fifteenth century."[6] But how elaborately "worked out" is a canon or a fugue that is written in a style that recognizes no distinction between consonance and dissonance, so that harmonically speaking, literally anything goes? The essence of counterpoint has always been its "dissonance treatment." That, and that

alone, is where the skill is required and displayed. What makes Bach's *Musical Offering* or *Art of Fugue* the astonishing tours de force that they are is not just the complexity of the texture, but the fact that that complexity is achieved within such exacting constraints. Take away the constraints and you have rendered the tour de force entirely pointless.

But of course Schoenberg knew that perfectly well—much better than his humorless admirers. Look again at the text: it is all about frenzied but pointless activity. That is a perfect description of an elaborate contrapuntal texture with "emancipated dissonance." Or to put it the other way around, an elaborate contrapuntal texture with emancipated dissonance is a perfect metaphor for the urgent but ineffectual efforts Pierrot is making. (Notice, too, some traditionally comic word painting: the instrumental parts go into reverse just when the text describes Pierrot "looking round and round.") From a bogus masterpiece of counterpoint, *Der Mondfleck* becomes a genuine masterpiece of self-mocking irony. (Once, to a pupil, Schoenberg cracked that "now that I've emancipated dissonance, anybody can be a composer.") Most pertinent of all, perhaps, to the discussion with which this chapter began is the fact that this most ironically distanced item in *Pierrot lunaire* is the very one that musically (as well as textually) parodies archaic forms. Once again pastiche has served as metaphor for an ironic modernist sensibility. From the unlikeliest of quarters, it seems, namely the "expressionist" camp, we have confirmation of Ortega y Gasset's diagnosis of modern art (first quoted in chapter 2) as "play and nothing else," and therefore as "invariably waggish" or jesting, because its primary concern is with style, the "how" rather than the "what" of art. And that, Ortega suggests, is why modern art "avoids living forms" but instead, making an end run around the immediate past, claims kinship with the imagined eighteenth century. "The imperative of unmitigated realism that dominated the artistic sensibility of the last century," Ortega wrote, including all art that aspires to direct communication of feeling,



ex. 8-7 Arnold Schoenberg, *Pierrot lunaire*, no. 18, *Der Mondfleck*, mm. 9–11

must be put down as a freak in aesthetic evolution. It thus appears that the new inspiration, extravagant though it seems, is merely returning, at least in one point, to the royal road of art. For this road is called “will to style.” But to stylize means to deform reality, to derealize; style involves dehumanization. And vice versa, there is no other means of stylizing except by dehumanizing. Whereas realism, exhorting the artist faithfully to follow reality, exhorts him to abandon style. An enthusiast of realist painting, groping for the suggestive word, will declare that it has “character.” And character, not style, is distinctive of nineteenth-century art in all its media. The eighteenth century, on the other hand, which had so little character, was a past master of style.[7]

Notes:

(4) Engelbert Humperdinck to a Dr. Distl, 2 November 1898; quoted in Edward F. Kravitt, *The Lied: Mirror of Late Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 87.

(5) Egon Wellesz, *Arnold Schoenberg: The Formative Years* (London: Galliard, 1971), pp. 7–8.

(6) Charles Rosen, *Arnold Schoenberg* (New York: Viking Press, 1975), p. 55; or Wellesz: "in the whole range of modern music I have nowhere found [anything] to place beside it" (*Schoenberg: The Formative Years*, p. 142).

(7) José Ortega y Gasset, *The Dehumanization of Art*, trans. Helene Weyl (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 25.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Arnold Schoenberg

Igor Stravinsky

BREAKING WITH TRADITION

Chapter: CHAPTER 8 Pathos Is Banned
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Ortega was writing in 1925, two years after Stravinsky brought forth his Octet, when the big change in sensibility that he was describing was (or seemed) a fait accompli. In 1912, it did not yet look that way. *Pierrot lunaire,* as the quotation above from Wellesz already implied, seemed an exceptional work within Schoenberg's output, even a somewhat deviant one. It had been commissioned from an outside party, after all; it did not arise "spontaneously" out of his own artistic imagination. And, at the time, its commitment to irony was not as obvious as it may appear today.

Stravinsky, who attended one of its "first run" performances as Schoenberg's guest, had mixed feelings about *Pierrot*. On the one hand he admired the instrumental writing enormously, and even imitated it a bit in his next work (three songs on Japanese poems accompanied by a small chamber ensemble with piano like the one in *Pierrot*.) But on the other hand he thought it esthetically outmoded, comparing its wallowing in the macabre with what he called the "Beardsley cult,"[8] implying that Schoenberg was still under the influence of the paintings and drawings of the British "decadent" artist Aubrey Beardsley (1872–98), whose most famous work was a set of gruesome illustrations to Wilde's *Salomé,* on which Strauss based his most overtly "decadent" opera (see Fig. 1-6).

What as of 1912 was a widely resisted "call"—that modern artists give unambiguous preference to irony over sincerity—had by 1925 become the order of the day, to resist which could seem downright backward. This was a much more significant rupture than the one created by maximalism, which however it impressed audiences with its radical means, nevertheless remained faithful to its (and their) immediate esthetic heritage. The ironic break meant—for the first time—the rejection of the immediate past, a true break with tradition. Artists were now against something as well as for something. The break created divisions and dissension among artists as well as between artists and audience. If we insist on maintaining the fiction that a new century is a new age, then the triumph of the "ban on all pathos," as Ortega called it, was the true beginning of the twentieth century for art.

One of the clearest and most eloquent spokesmen for the ban was the English poet and critic Thomas Ernest (or T. E.) Hulme (1883–1917). In a series of articles published near the end of his short life, he articulated better than anyone else what the new movement was against, and why. In one, called "Romanticism and Classicism," he put things in bluntly political terms: "It was romanticism that made the revolution; they who hate the revolution hate romanticism."[9] In another, "Modern Art and Its Philosophy," he brought up matters of religion. Romanticism, he argued, was the culminating phase of humanism, the fatal hubris "which is the opposite of the doctrine of original sin: the belief that man as a part of nature was after all something satisfactory." He went on:

> The change which Copernicus is supposed to have brought about is the exact contrary of the fact. Before Copernicus, man was not the center of the world; after Copernicus he was. You get a change from a certain profundity and intensity to that flat and insipid optimism which, passing through its first stage of decay in Rousseau, has finally culminated in the state of slush in which we have the misfortune to live.[10]

In place of the decadent moral flabbiness Hulme saw in romanticism, which valued exactly what seemed to him least valuable in humanity (namely, its transient and irrational feelings), he called for a return to "the dry hardness which you get in the classics."[11] And one way of recapturing that was to emulate classical "stylization," as Stravinsky seemed to do in his Octet. Even before he wrote that work, in fact, Stravinsky had been co-opted (as we would now say) by the increasingly antiromantic factions that were springing up in England and France, and made their involuntary standard bearer.

Perhaps the first to do this was the French critic Jacques Rivière (1886–1925), the editor of *La nouvelle revue française*, an artistically avant-garde but politically conservative and aggressively nationalistic literary forum. In his reviews of Stravinsky's early ballets, Rivière promoted the composer from the status of mere musician to that of exemplary artist for France, where neoclassical sentiments merged inextricably with nationalistic ones. When everyone else was exclaiming at the orgiastic dissonance of *The Rite of Spring*, marveling at Stravinsky's *âme slave* ("Slavic soul") and the sublime terror his music evoked, Rivière called *The Rite* "the first masterpiece we may stack up against those of impressionism," for the following reasons:

> The great novelty of *The Rite of Spring* is its renunciation of "sauce." Here is a work that is absolutely pure. Nothing is blurred, nothing is mitigated by shadows; no veils and no poetic sweeteners; not a trace of atmosphere. The work is whole and tough, its parts remain quite raw; they are served up without digestive aids; everything is crisp, intact, clear and crude. Never have we heard a music so magnificently limited. If Stravinsky has chosen those instruments that do not sigh, that say no more than they say, whose timbres are without expression and are like isolated words, it is because he wants to enunciate everything directly, explicitly, and concretely. His voice becomes the object's proxy, consuming it, replacing it; instead of evoking it, he utters it. Thus Stravinsky, with unmatched flair and accomplishment, is bringing about in music the same revolution that is taking place more humbly and tortuously in literature: he has passed from the sung to the said, from invocation to statement, from poetry to reportage.[12]

What Rivière called for in these prescient articles of 1913, without yet actually naming it, was a new sort of neoclassicism that had little or nothing to do with the fairyland type the romantics had enjoyed. Rather than a "delicious" or a "culinary" pastiche, Rivière called for a "denuded" or "stripped-down style" (*style dépouillé*) of unprecedented plainness. The first critic who seriously applied the word "neoclassical" to a work of Stravinsky (or anyone else, for that matter) had this sort of "dry hardness" in mind, rather than a gratifying stylistic soufflé.

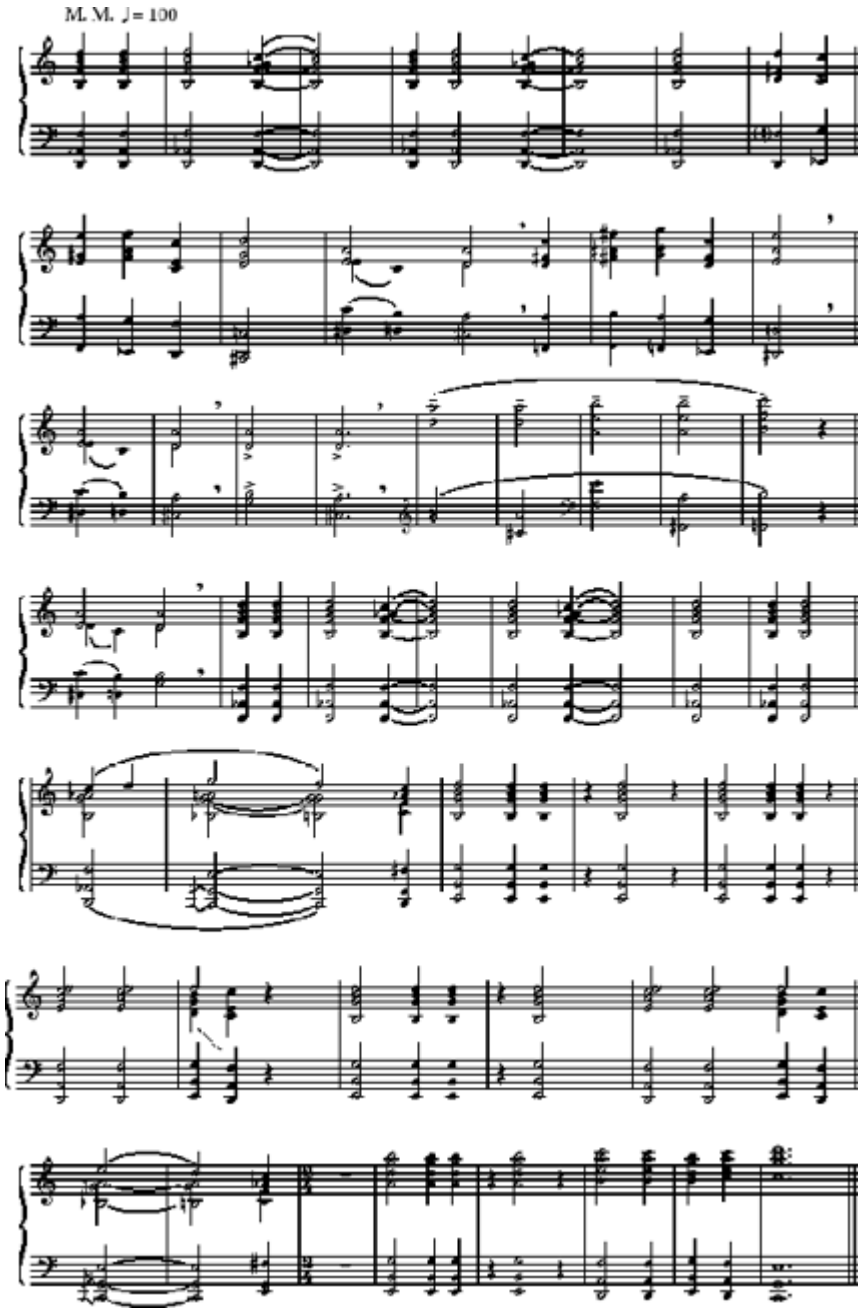
That critic, Boris de Schloezer (1881–1969), was like Stravinsky a Russian exile in Paris. The article in which he used the word was published in 1923, the year of the Octet, but nine months before its first performance. It concerned a different work, Stravinsky's *Symphonies d'instruments à vent* ("Symphonies [or concords] of wind instruments"), a memorial to Debussy that had created a big stir in 1920 when its amazingly "stripped down" concluding section, arranged for piano, had been published in the appendix to a Debussy commemorative issue of a French music magazine (Ex. 8-8). What made the *Symphonies* "neoclassical" for Schloezer, thence for many others, was the assumption that it was

> only a system of sounds, which follow one another and group themselves according to purely musical affinities; the thought of the artist places itself only in the musical plan without ever setting foot in the domain of psychology. Emotions, feelings, desires, aspirations—this is the terrain from which he had pushed his work. The art of Stravinsky is nevertheless strongly expressive; he moves us profoundly and his perception is never formularized; but there is one specific emotion, a musical emotion. This art does not pursue feeling or emotion; but it attains grace infallibly by its force and by its perfection.[13]

These words were arguably irrelevant to the poetic conception of the *Symphonies d'instruments à vent* as a memorial piece or *tombeau* for Debussy that demonstrably mimics the liturgical contents of a Russian Orthodox *panikhida* or funeral service, just as Rivière's description of *The Rite* was arguably irrelevant to *its* original concept. Nevertheless, these writings about Stravinsky are of great historical moment, not only for

what they tell us about the reception of Stravinsky's music, but because they had an enormous impact on the composer himself. They "influenced" him decisively toward his own brand of neoclassicism, of which the Octet was probably the first fully conscious manifestation. Stravinsky immediately became an ardent propagandist for the new esthetic, giving it an especially strong expression in some famous fighting words uttered in the heat of esthetic battle during the 1920s and 1930s. In his autobiography, *Chronicles of My Life* (1936), he summed it all up by saying that "music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to *express* anything at all, whether a feeling, an attitude of mind, a psychological mood, a phenomenon of nature, etc.," and went on to claim that

> expression has never been an inherent property of music. That is by no means the purpose of its existence. If, as is nearly always the case, music appears to express something, this is only an illusion and not a reality. It is simply an additional attribute which, by tacit and inveterate agreement, we have lent it, thrust upon it, as a label, a convention—in short, an aspect unconsciously or by force of habit, we have come to confuse with its essential being.[14]



ex. 8-8 Igor Stravinsky, *Symphonies d'instruments à vent*, final section as published in *Revue Musicale*

Three years later, lecturing at Harvard University, Stravinsky inveighed against Wagner and his *Gesamtkunstwerk* or "total work of art." The Wagnerian system, he railed, despite all the claims made for it as the bearer of music's historic destiny, "far from having raised the level of musical culture, has never ceased to undermine it and finally to debase it in the most paradoxical fashion."[15] And that is because Wagner, more than any other romantic composer, had yoked music, "a purely sensual delight," to "the murky inanities of the Art-Religion."

Stravinsky's first pronouncements of this kind came almost immediately after Schloezer's article about his *Symphonies*, and almost certainly in response to it. In a program note that accompanied performances of the *Symphonies* in the late 1920s and 1930s, Stravinsky described it as entirely formalist and transcendent—that is, without "extramusical" content of any kind. It was, he wrote, no more and no less than an arrangement of "tonal masses, sculptured in marble, to be regarded objectively by the ear."[16] Like any number of other modern artists, Stravinsky had been brought round, over the decade between 1913 (*The Rite of Spring*) and 1923 (the Octet) to a view of art that completely sacrificed sincerity to irony. Rivière and Schloezer had helped him get there. We are always influenced by those who praise us, especially when the praise is so intelligent, so hyperbolic—and so timely. Stravinsky did what was necessary to keep that praise coming.

Notes:

(8) *Stravinsky: An Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1936), p. 67.

(9) "Romanticism and Classicism," in T. E. Hulme, *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. Herbert Read (London: Routledge, 1924), p. 115.

(10) Hulme, "Modern Art and Its Philosophy," *Speculations*, p. 80.

(11) Hulme, *Speculations*, pp. 126–27.

(12) Jacques Rivière, "Le Sacre du Printemps," *La Nouvelle Revue française*, 1 November 1913; trans. adapted from Truman C. Bullard, "The First Performance of Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps*," Vol. II (Ph.D. diss., Eastman School of Music, 1971), pp. 269–308.

(13) Boris de Schloezer, "La musique," *La Revue contemporaine*, 1 February 1923; quoted in Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music from the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988), p. 130.

(14) *Stravinsky: An Autobiography*, pp. 83–84.

(15) Igor Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons*, trans. Arthur Knodel and Ingolf Dahl (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 62.

(16) Quoted in Deems Taylor, *Of Men and Music* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1937), pp. 89–90.

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See also from Grove Music Online
Modernism

THE END OF THE "LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY"

Chapter: CHAPTER 8 Pathos Is Banned
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

But nobody's words are ever as eloquent as events, and over that crucial decade events had completely transformed the world that European and American artists knew. The First World War, known simply as "The Great War" until there was a Second, was one of the most horrific watersheds in European history. It put a dismal end to what many historians in its wake have called "the long nineteenth century," which had begun with another watershed event, the French Revolution, which Hulme, and modern neoclassicists in general, so abhorred. What had united the long nineteenth century were its optimism and its faith in progress, and these were the Great War's first and most permanent casualties.

To call it a "world" war is of course a Eurocentric conceit, although its territory spread wider than that of any previous war, with battles fought in parts of Asia and Africa as well as Europe, and with the United States belatedly joining in (marking America's first participation in a war fought on foreign soil). But a "great" war it surely was, indeed the greatest ever, if greatness is measured in terms of awful numbers. It smashed four empires: the ancient Austrian one, the recent German one, the far-flung Ottoman Turkish one, and the huge but contiguous Russian one (which however would soon be reconstituted as the Soviet Union). It was the first war to be fought not only on land and sea, but also in the air. It was the first war to witness the use of machine guns, tanks, aerial bombing, and poison gas. It was the first modern war to include episodes of genocide (particularly of Armenians at the hands of the Turks in 1915 on suspicion of conspiring with the Russians).

But even the "legitimate" military carnage was on a scale never before imaginable. Of the four most heavily engaged belligerents, the British lost a million men (out of an adult male population of some twenty million), the Russians and French 1,700,000 each, and the Germans and Austrians more than three million combined. The total war dead approached nine million. Measured against the puny proximate cause of the war—Austria's avenging the assassination of the emperor's nephew and heir by a Serbian nationalist—and the benefits it secured (despite all the rhetoric, none at all), these futile losses produced a desperate and irreparable disillusionment. "This is not war," an Indian soldier conscripted to fight with the British wrote home after being wounded, "it is the ending of the world."[17] Another writer, even more chillingly, compared it to "the guillotining of a world."[18]

The worst episode, the Battle of the Somme (July to November 1916), where 70,000 British soldiers were killed (20,000 in a single day) and 170,000 wounded, "marked the end," in the words of John Keegan, the war's most eminent historian, "of an age of vital optimism in British life that has never been recovered."[19] That despond was by no means confined to the British; they, after all, were on the winning side. Last to lose their optimism, of course, were the politicians and generals who managed the struggle. As another historian, Tony Judt, comments, they "were in a war they had not expected and did not understand; but the insouciant enthusiasm with which they sent hundreds of thousands of young men to their death retains its power to shock and nauseate a century later."[20]

The wave of shock and nausea produced by the Great War reverberated keenly but for the most part indirectly in the arts, chiefly in the form of irony, black humor, and cynicism. Indeed, irony has been the one

indispensable ingredient in practically all European art ever since—and a lot of American art as well, although America's late entrance in the Great War, its relatively light losses (some 114,000), and the prestige its soldiers and its president Wilson were accorded in the aftermath, spared its population and its artists the immediate slough of despond and allowed the persistence of an optimism that registered particularly, as we will see, in the 1920s.

The triumph of Ortega's "ban on all pathos" is only understandable in the context of the encompassing disillusionment of Europe. It cast a retrospective pall over all the seriously spiritual and exalted art the previous century had produced. All rhetoric of hope and glory now seemed a lie. "The plunge of civilization into this abyss of blood and darkness," wrote Henry James,

> is a thing that so gives away the whole long age during which we have supposed the world to be, with whatever abatement, gradually bettering, that to have to take it all now for what the treacherous years were all the while really making for and *meaning* is too tragic for any words.[21]

The only thing to do was laugh, or at least scoff. "The more revolting it was, the more we shouted with laughter," wrote the war correspondent Sir Philip Gibbs in a book of 1920 pointedly titled *Now It Can Be Told*. That laughter was

> the laughter of mortals at the trick that had been played on them by an ironical fate. They had been taught to believe that the whole object of life was to reach out to beauty and love, and that mankind, in its progress to perfection, had killed the beast instinct, cruelty, blood-lust, the primitive, savage law of survival by tooth and claw and club and ax. All poetry, all religion had preached this gospel and this promise. Now that ideal was broken like a china vase dashed to the ground. The contrast between That and This was devastating. The wartime humor of the soul roared with mirth at the sight of all that dignity and elegance despoiled.[22]

Even after the sardonic laughter had died down, dignity and elegance, beauty and love, and especially progress to perfection remained under suspicion. They were now regarded, one and all, as lies. Hence the preference, keenly if as yet wishfully noted by Rivière in Stravinsky even before the war, for the matter-of-factly said over the rhapsodically sung, for fact over feeling, for reportage over "poetry." As Ernest Hemingway put it in *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), "abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates."[23] Surveying the language of poetry before and after the Great War, the literary critic Paul Fussell noted the unlamented demise of "high" diction, the kind in which—

> A friend is a *comrade*
>
> Friendship is *comradeship, fellowship*
>
> A horse is a *steed*, or *charger*
>
> The enemy is *the foe*, or *the host*
>
> Danger is *peril*
>
> To conquer is to *vanquish*
>
> To attack is to *assail*
>
> To be earnestly brave is to be *gallant*
>
> To be cheerfully brave is to be *plucky*
>
> To be stolidly brave is to be *staunch*

Bravery considered after the fact is *valor*

The dead on the battlefield are *the fallen*[24]

—and so on, in favor of the plain and "ugly" language of poets who can no longer muster belief in what Hemingway derided as the "abstract words." (Fussell names T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land* of 1922, "with its rats' alleys, dull canals, and dead men who have lost their bones.") The point holds true, maybe truer even, if one compares the grandiose work of the musical maximalists we know—Strauss, Mahler, Scriabin, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and perhaps especially Ives (who like other Americans carried prewar optimism into the postwar world, or tried to)—with the modernist music we shall be encountering from here on. The maximalists went into a profound eclipse: Mahler was banished from the active repertory (except in a few places particularly associated with him, like Vienna, New York, and Amsterdam) until the 1960s, when Ives, too, was rediscovered (or rather, wholly discovered for the first time). Scriabin has yet to make a full comeback. The contrast can best be observed, perhaps, in the work of composers like Stravinsky and Schoenberg, whose prime creative years straddled the divide. They became the harbingers of the great disillusion.

Notes:

(17) Quoted in Tony Judt, "The End of the World," *New York Times Book Review*, 27 June 1999, p. 12.

(18) David Lowe, "Bourbon County" (1973); quoted in Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 24.

(19) John Keegan, *The First World War*; quoted in Judt, "The End of the World," p. 10.

(20) Judt, "The End of the World," p. 10.

(21) Quoted in Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, p. 8.

(22) Philip Gibbs, *Now It Can Be Told* (1920); quoted in Fussell, *The Great War*, p. 8.

(23) Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 191.

(24) Fussell, *The Great War in Modern Memory*, pp. 21–22.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Igor Stravinsky

VITAL VS. GEOMETRICAL

Chapter: CHAPTER 8 Pathos Is Banned
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

But there was yet another factor that produced the triumph of irony—Ortega's "dehumanization"—in modern art. Our best entrée to it will come through the visual arts rather than literature; and once again T. E. Hulme (who—now it can be told—perished in the trenches at Passchendaele in 1917, one of England's unlucky million) can be our guide. In accounting for the death of naturalism in twentieth-century art (a death he enthusiastically hastened to abet), Hulme invoked a pair of terms that had first been introduced into art history by the German scholar Wilhelm Worringer in a book called *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* ("Abstraction and empathy", 1908).

The terms are "vital" (whence "vitalism") and "geometrical." Worringer had posited them as the poles of an ever-swinging pendulum. The sentimental "slush" that had seeped into art (and politics) over the course of the long nineteenth century, Hulme argued, was due to an excess of vitalism, the view of art that equated its beauty with its power to evoke a pleasurable empathy. Any work of art that a vitalist finds beautiful can only be

> an objectification of our own pleasure in activity, and our own vitality. The worth of a line or form consists in the value of the life which it contains for us. Putting the matter more simply we may say that in this art there is always a feeling of liking for, and pleasure in, the forms and movements to be found in nature.[25]

But when we lose our capacity to exult in the world and our place in the order of things—or in other words, when we lose our optimism—we shall incline toward the "geometrical" art, the kind which, Hulme clairvoyantly predicted, was going to gain ascendancy in the twentieth century. It was art that "most obviously exhibits no delight in nature and no striving after vitality. Its forms are always what can be described as stiff and lifeless."[26] Hulme associated such art with the "tendency to abstraction"—not the kind of fuzzy grandiloquent "abstractions" that Hemingway derided as false sentiment, but just the opposite, the kind of abstraction associated with geometrical archetypes: something realer than the real, superhumanly real. For "dehumanization," make no mistake, aimed higher, not lower, than the human.

"What is the nature of this tendency?"[27] Hulme asked, rhetorically. "What is the condition of mind of the people whose art is governed by it?" His beautifully lucid answer, in "Modern Art and Its Philosophy," is indispensable to any understanding of the music that followed, and repudiated, the long nineteenth century. "While a naturalistic art," Hulme wrote,

> is the result of a happy pantheistic relation between man and the outside world, the tendency to abstraction, on the contrary, occurs in races whose attitude to the outside world is the exact contrary of this.
>
> In art this state of mind results in a desire to create a certain abstract geometrical shape, which, being durable and permanent, shall be a refuge from the flux and impermanence of outside nature. The need which art satisfies here, is not the delight in the forms of nature, which is a characteristic of all vital arts, but the exact contrary. In the reproduction of natural objects there is an attempt to purify

> them of their characteristically living qualities in order to make them necessary and immovable. The changing is translated into something fixed and necessary. This leads to rigid lines and dead crystalline form, for pure geometrical regularity gives a certain pleasure to men troubled by the obscurity of outside appearance. The geometrical line is something absolutely distinct from the messiness, the confusion, and the accidental details of existing things.

That messiness and confusion were most apparent in music when it came to the expression of irrational subjective feeling, the very thing that romantic artists gloried in. So subjective expression (and freedom of expression) became the bête noire, the hated "black beast" of postwar esthetics, as already hinted in several extracts from the writings of the postwar Stravinsky. Hostility to the arbitrariness and unpredictability to which subjective expression gives rise, and the refuge that artists (and others) sought in the Necessary and the Immovable can be observed not only in music composition but also, possibly even more vividly, in musical performance.

A great change in the performance style of all European classical music, regardless of age or origin, followed the Great War. The ban on pathos was translated directly into a ban on two practices that symbolized pathos in musical performance: *tempo rubato* (spontaneous, unnotated variation in tempo) and similarly unnotated fluctuations in dynamics. Play with variable tempo and dynamics and you are playing "romantically." That is how all music was played up until the 1920s, as early phonograph recordings testify. No music is played like that any more, not even romantic music. All music is played "as written," within a hierarchical chain of command (composer to editor to performer, with an additional step when a conductor is employed) that takes all initiative away from the person actually producing the sounds.

Stravinsky can again be our witness. In his Harvard lectures of 1939, he drew a radical distinction between two kinds of performance, which he called "execution" and "interpretation." Between them, he warned, "there exists a difference in make-up that is of an ethical rather than of an esthetic order."[28] Execution is "the strict putting into effect of an explicit will that contains nothing beyond what it specifically commands." Interpretation is the expressive input from the performer that goes beyond what the text explicitly prescribes, and it is "at the root of all the errors, all the sins, all the misunderstandings that interpose themselves between the musical work and the listener and prevent a faithful transmission of its message." Stravinsky heaps scorn on what in 1939 was not yet quite as bygone a performance style as it has since become:

> The sin against the spirit of the work always begins with a sin against its letter and leads to the endless follies which an ever-flourishing literature in the worst taste [that is, "vitalist" music criticism] does its best to sanction. Thus it follows that a *crescendo*, as we all know, is always accompanied by a speeding up of movement, while a slowing down never fails to accompany a *diminuendo*. The superfluous is refined upon; a *piano, piano pianissimo* is delicately sought after; great pride is taken in perfecting useless nuances—a concern that usually goes hand in hand with inaccurate rhythm.[29]

The literalness on which Stravinsky is insisting, and (taking the long view a book like this encourages) which represents the ultimate triumph of the literate tradition over the oral (which is where pupils learn to make unnotated nuances by imitating their teachers), is the most durable and tangible result of the postwar triumph of dehumanization. In place of seemingly arbitrary decisions symbolizing the influence of emotion (which are not really arbitrary, of course, but which are maintained by oral tradition) one "takes refuge," as Hulme would say, in what is Necessary and Immovable, namely the written text, which thus becomes even more of a sacrosanct and timeless monument than ever. What is written, in its relative permanence, becomes Holy Writ.

Notes:

(25) Hulme, *Speculations*, p. 85.

(26) *Ibid*.

(27) *Ibid*., pp. 86–87.

(28) Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music*, p. 128.

(29) *Ibid*., p. 129.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Nationalism in Music

SOME MORE TROUBLING POLITICS

Chapter: CHAPTER 8 Pathos Is Banned
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The authoritarian control thus vested in the text (and behind the text, in the composer) has obvious political parallels, and there is no evading its relationship to the rise of totalitarianism in postwar Europe. That relationship was not a direct or causal one. Neither brought about the other, nor does an antiromantic compositional style or performance practice necessarily commit a musician to totalitarian politics. To cite a famous counterexample, one of the most influential literalists among twentieth-century performers, the conductor Arturo Toscanini (1867–1957), who so famously exhorted the musicians he led to play *Com'è scritto* ("Just as written"), was famous for his opposition to the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, and later to the German dictator Adolf Hitler. Conversely, some totalitarian regimes, notably the Soviet dictatorship in Russia, would support the production of "vitalist" or neoromantic music as a palliative influence on the population.

And yet T. E. Hulme did state it as a general axiom that "they who hate the revolution hate romanticism"; and the general level of correlation between "neoclassical" esthetics and totalitarian politics is high enough to suggest that both were, at least in considerable part, responses to a common stimulus in the destructive chaos of the Great War and its immediate aftermath. Ortega y Gasset, the great theorist of dehumanization, was also one of the architects of Spanish fascism and a sworn enemy of democracy. His most famous book, *The Revolt of the Masses* (1929), argued that an intellectual minority must always be in a position to exercise control over the uneducated majority so as to preserve civil order. Merely to note this much, of course, would be to imply guilt by association, a tactic as unreliable as it is unfair. But Ortega himself drew the connection between his esthetics and his politics in the very essay from which all our previous quotes from him have come.

Modern art is hated, he argued in "The Dehumanization of Art," because it is socially divisive. But where a humanitarian like Tolstoy would curse it for that reason, Ortega blesses it:

> Through its mere presence, the art of the young compels the average citizen to realize that he is just this—the average citizen, a creature incapable of receiving the sacrament of art, blind and deaf to pure beauty. But such a thing cannot be done after a hundred years of adulation of the masses and apotheosis of the people. Accustomed to ruling supreme, the masses feel that the new art, which is the art of a privileged aristocracy of finer senses, endangers their rights as men. Whenever the new Muses present themselves, the masses bristle.
>
> For a century and a half the masses have claimed to be the whole of society. Stravinsky's music or the plays of [Luigi] Pirandello [1867–1936, another apostle of the new irony] have the sociological effect of compelling the people to recognize itself for what it is: a component among others of the social structure, inert matter of the historical process, a secondary factor in the cosmos of spiritual life. On the other hand, the new art also helps the elite to recognize themselves and one another in the drab mass of society and to learn their mission which consists in being few and holding their own against the many.
>
> A time must come in which society, from politics to art, reorganizes itself into two orders or ranks: the illustrious and the vulgar. That chaotic, shapeless, and undifferentiated state without discipline and

> social structure in which Europe has lived these hundred and fifty years cannot go on. Behind all contemporary life lurks the provoking and profound injustice of the assumption that men are actually equal. Each move among men so obviously reveals the opposite that each move results in a painful clash.
>
> If this subject were broached in politics the passions aroused would run too high to make oneself understood. Fortunately the unity of spirit within a historical epoch allows us to point out serenely and with perfect clarity in the germinating art of our time the same symptoms and signals of a moral revision that in politics present themselves obscured by low passions.[30]

These are fighting words on behalf of the most barefaced elitism we've encountered yet—an elitism that, many would argue, has been thoroughly discredited by the subsequent historical record—a record that includes previously unimaginable atrocities carried out by powerful elites against the powerless. The question that remains unresolved is whether art that was once so promoted can be divorced from the politics and subsequently enjoyed in a "purely" esthetic way, or whether (as Ortega actually implies) art is always, or inevitably, the "stalking horse"—the benign cover or concealment—of politics.

Those who would argue that art, inhabiting a realm of its own, is politically neutral and innocent, must contend with Stravinsky's assertion that questions of musical performance are "of an ethical, rather than of an esthetic order." For ethics, unlike esthetics, is not so easily detached from politics—that is, from the actual or symbolic ordering of society. And given that much, can one fully separate Stravinsky the musician from the man who gave the following statement to a reporter from a Rome newspaper, right before an audience with *Il Duce* ("The Leader") himself in 1930?

> I don't believe that anyone venerates Mussolini more than I. To me, he is the *one man who counts* nowadays in the whole world. I have traveled a great deal: I know many exalted personages, and my artist's mind does not shrink from political and social issues. Well, after having seen so many events and so many more or less representative men, I have an overpowering urge to render homage to your Duce. He is the savior of Italy and—let us hope—the world.[31]

Many extenuating circumstances could be mentioned: Stravinsky, a Russian aristocrat by birth, had been uprooted and disinherited by the Bolshevik revolution and (like Schoenberg, as quoted in the previous chapter) sought the protection of a prince who now, through no fault of Stravinsky's, suffers history's contempt for deeds as yet undreamt of when Stravinsky gave his interview. Does Stravinsky now deserve to share in that contempt? Are artists who enjoyed the patronage of this century's bloodsoaked dictators stained with the blood that soaked them? If so, what about the tyrants of the past and the artists whom they patronized? Shall we hold Louis XIV's misdeeds against Lully? Louis XV's against Rameau? Is Michelangelo answerable to the Lutherans for the policies of the popes who commissioned his idolatrous images?

But of course Stravinsky could have chased or chosen other patrons, and his enthusiasm for Mussolini's authoritarian politics seems to have been at the time sincere. Does that mean, as embarrassed biographers sometimes write, that he was politically "naive"? Or is naïveté simply the name we give retrospectively to the backing of losers? One writer has "excused" Stravinsky for his attraction to Mussolini (which led him, in other press interviews, to profess personal loyalty to the Duce and even call himself a fascist[32]) by suggesting that anybody might have been "bamboozled" by the sort of flattering attention Mussolini paid the composer. But of course by the 1920s Stravinsky was the most famous composer alive; flattering attention was paid him everywhere.

In back of all these questions is the most troubling and durable one of all: how is artistic excellence, which always comes at a high price, to be reconciled with ideals of political and social equality? Who is to pay for "the art of the few," when the few who used to pay are no longer able to do so, and when the many wield unprecedented political and economic power? Many have argued that "high art" has been living, since the First World War, on borrowed time. It is not hard to find evidence to back this argument up, and we will certainly be sifting it in the chapters to come (along with counterarguments and counterevidence).

If the argument is true, though, then it follows that the art, specifically the musical works, that will henceforth supply the subject matter of this book are engaged in a holding or rearguard action against an inexorable historical tide that can only be reversed if the progress of democracy is reversed. Putting it this way puts the cultural authenticity of "classical music" sorely in question (especially if democracy is regarded as unquestionable). Whatever the answers may be, and of course we will sample many, the question has been in the back of every thinking musician's mind since the 1920s.

Notes:

(30) Ortega y Gasset, *The Dehumanization of Art*, pp. 6–8.

(31) Alberto Gasco, *Da Cimarosa a Stravinsky* (Rome, 1939); quoted in Harvey Sachs, *Music in Fascist Italy* (New York: Norton, 1988), p. 168.

(32) *Il Piccolo*, May 1935; quoted in Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), p. 552.

Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

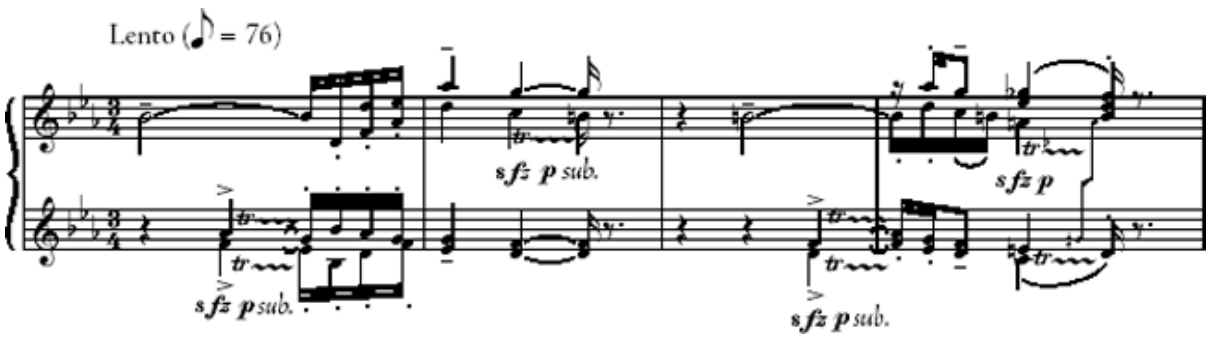
See also from Grove Music Online
Igor Stravinsky

Stravinsky: The Late Neo-Classical Works

AND NOW THE MUSIC

Chapter: CHAPTER 8 Pathos Is Banned
Source: MUSIC IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Turning at long last to Stravinsky's Octet, the work that started this tortuous discussion of sinister subtexts and convoluted circumstances on its way, we may be relieved—or dismayed—to find that, taken on its own terms, it is such an innocently diverting little piece. But of course to say that much is already a joke—or at least an exercise, like everything else in this chapter, in irony.



ex. 8-9 Igor Stravinsky, *Octet for Winds* in Arthur Lourié's piano transcription, I, mm. 1–4

For nothing ever comes "on its own terms," and nothing can be taken that way. History provides everything with a context. And nothing, therefore, can ever be truly innocent (of history, that is). Copland's bewildered reaction to the piece—not the sort of reaction one normally has to an innocent diversion—has already established that much for us. What bewildered him was not "the music itself" but the context in which he heard it: a concert at which a Stravinsky premiere (i.e., if past performance was anything to go by, a scandal) was about to take place. Hearing an innocent little diversion rather than the expected shock was of course a shock; and as Copland tells us, it led to a press scandal after all.

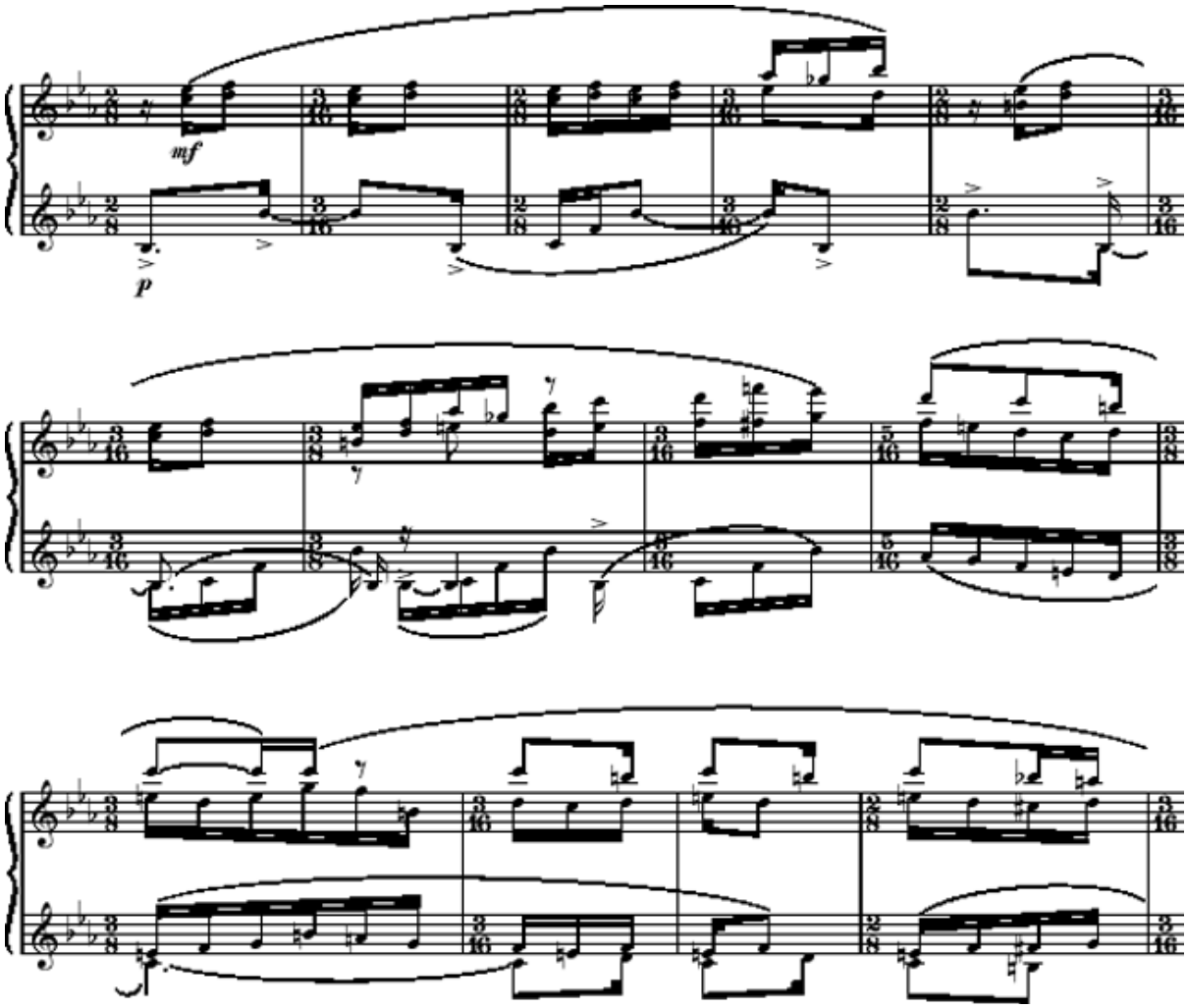
Or again—"on its own terms" the Octet's opening gesture, a trill in the two bassoons—Ex. 8-9, given like all the other citations from the Octet in piano reduction to avoid possible confusion about pitch on account of the transposing clarinet and trumpet parts—is courtly, decorous, charming. But those terms again depend on context: what is courtly, decorous, and charming in a work signed "Mozart" is brash and polemical in a work signed "Stravinsky" (at least the first time). So music can be listened to "on its own terms" only by listeners who are ignorant of historical contexts. Ignorance is bliss, one may retort. But even then, the context provided by ignorance is not neutral or transparent, since my ignorance is conditioned by my interests and predilections, or by their absence, and will differ from yours. "Listening to music 'on its own terms,'" then, can never be written without the use of "scare quotes"—the quotation marks that turn whatever is inside them into its opposite, or that at least put the statement and its negation on equal terms. The name of that game, of course, is irony. Listeners play it too.

The three movements of the Octet have time-honored Italian titles (Sinfonia, Tema con variazioni, Finale), more mock decorum masking a somewhat anxious commitment to the Necessary and the Immovable in the

face of the world's disarray. "Sinfonia," to a historian, connotes an opera overture, the "cradle of sonata form." And sonata form is the form this music takes, for the first time in Stravinsky's work since his graduation piece, a conventional symphony (opus 1, also—coincidentally?—in E♭ major) that he wrote under Rimsky-Korsakov's direction in 1905–07 just to prove that he could. Here again Stravinsky is proving that he can, or that he (and we) still can, even after those explosive prewar ballets; and, going further, asserting that he not only can but must—and so must you. "He declares that he is creating a new epoch with this," wrote a fellow Russian émigré, Serge Prokofieff, to a friend back home, "and that this is the only way to write nowadays."[33] Prokofieff was skeptical; to him Stravinsky's neoclassical music sounded like "Bach with smallpox."[34]

Jealous rival though he was, Prokofieff was on to something. Stravinsky once described his pastiche procedure in works like the Octet as a revival of "the constructive principles" of "eighteenth-century classicism."[35] But perhaps it would be a truer description to call it a revival of certain aspects of the phonology and morphology of eighteenth-century music, as a linguist might say (phonology being a vocabulary of usable sounds and morphology the combination of sounds into distinctive and characteristic patterns), but with constructive principles that bear the mark of Stravinsky's older neoprimitivist style, with its static ostinatos, its stable dissonances, and its abrupt disjunctures. Thus the opening trills say "eighteenth century" without actually sounding like eighteenth-century music, because the harmony and voice leading in which they are embedded would have been impossible in the eighteenth century.

The kind of stuttering melody that follows the bassoon trill in the flute (Ex. 8-10) is also characteristically Stravinskian rather than "classical," but the figuration that takes over in the same instrumental part toward the end of the example again says "eighteenth century," and more particularly, "Bach." Melodies that move between two distinct and discrete registers, implying a sort of harmonically-driven counterpoint, are familiar to twentieth-century musicians primarily from Bach's sonatas and suites for solo violin or cello. The conditions that gave rise to them are of course absent in Stravinsky's music. His flute melody is not there to supply its own "bass" and imply a harmonic progression. But even if it does not perform harmonic functions, it has a function to perform as a stylistic marker (or "morpheme").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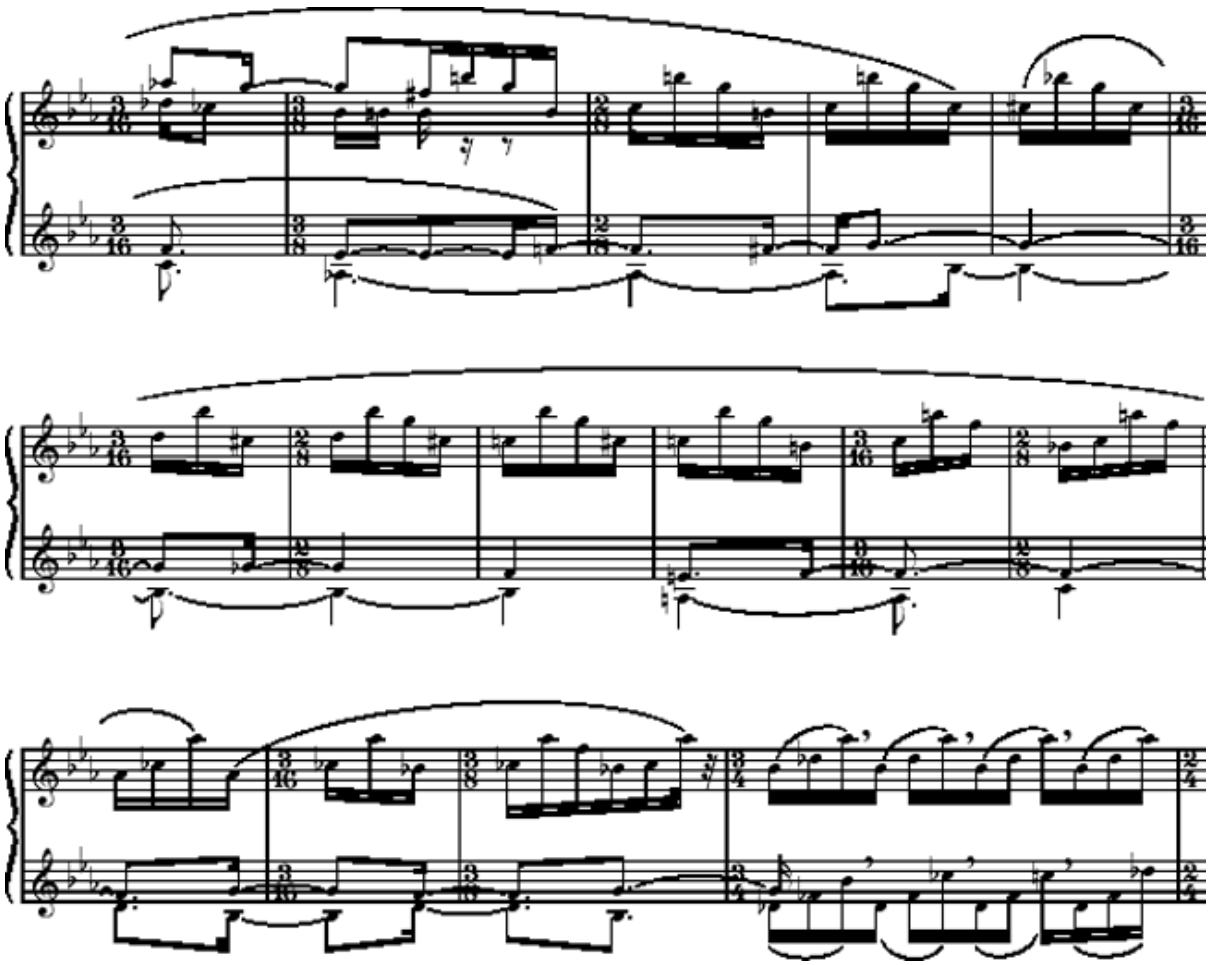
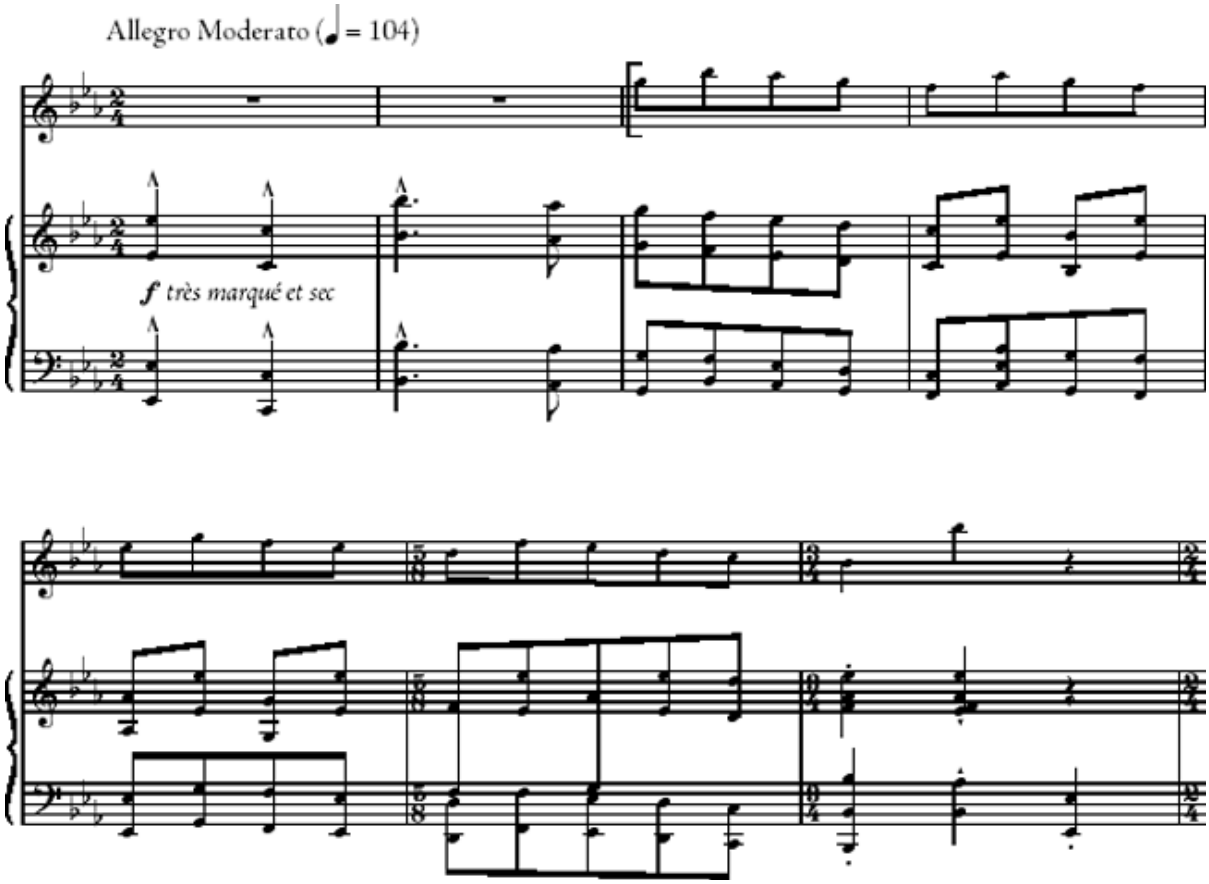


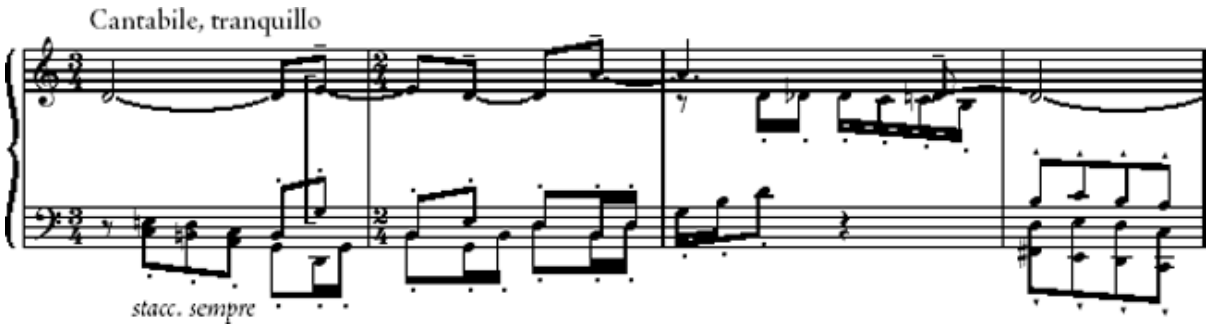
ex. 8-10 Igor Stravinsky, *Octet for Winds* in Arthur Lourié's piano transcription, I, mm. 5–32

The Allegro moderato that furnishes the body of the first movement is so cut-and-dried a "sonata form" as to be a virtual self-parody: first theme in trumpet II (Ex. 8-11a); second theme in trumpet I (Ex. 8-11b); a development (Ex. 8-11c) in which the anapestic rhythms from the accompaniment to the second theme come to the fore for a workout; and then, right on schedule, a recap (Ex. 8-11d) in which the anapests accompany the main theme. Those anapestic (short-short-long) rhythms in sixteenths and eighths also shout "Bach" to anyone who knows the Third Brandenburg Concerto, but the fragmented texture in which they disport themselves here is anything but Bachian.

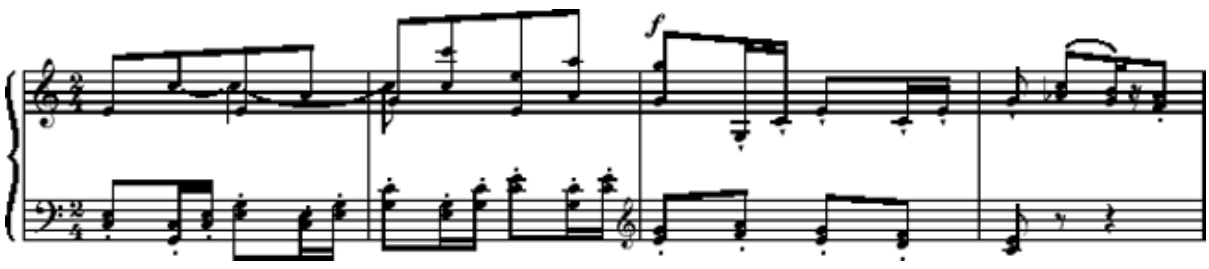
The Tema con variazioni begins (Ex. 8-12) with a little in-joke to reward those in the know about Stravinsky's harmonic idiom and its sources (in 1923, almost nobody beyond the circle of Rimsky-Korsakov's surviving pupils). The "classically" regular eight-measure theme, played *ben cantabile* ("singing nicely") at the outset by flute and clarinet at the double octave, is one of Stravinsky's longest "octatonic" melodies—that is, melodies drawn exclusively from a scale of alternating half steps and whole steps, in this case A–B♭–C–C♯–D♯–E–F♯–G. As we have observed many times, the octatonic scale reproduces itself when transposed by a minor third; so the repetition of the melody by the second trumpet beginning on E rather than C♯ involves no modulation. Rather, the transposition supplies the D♯ that completes the representation of the octatonic scale.



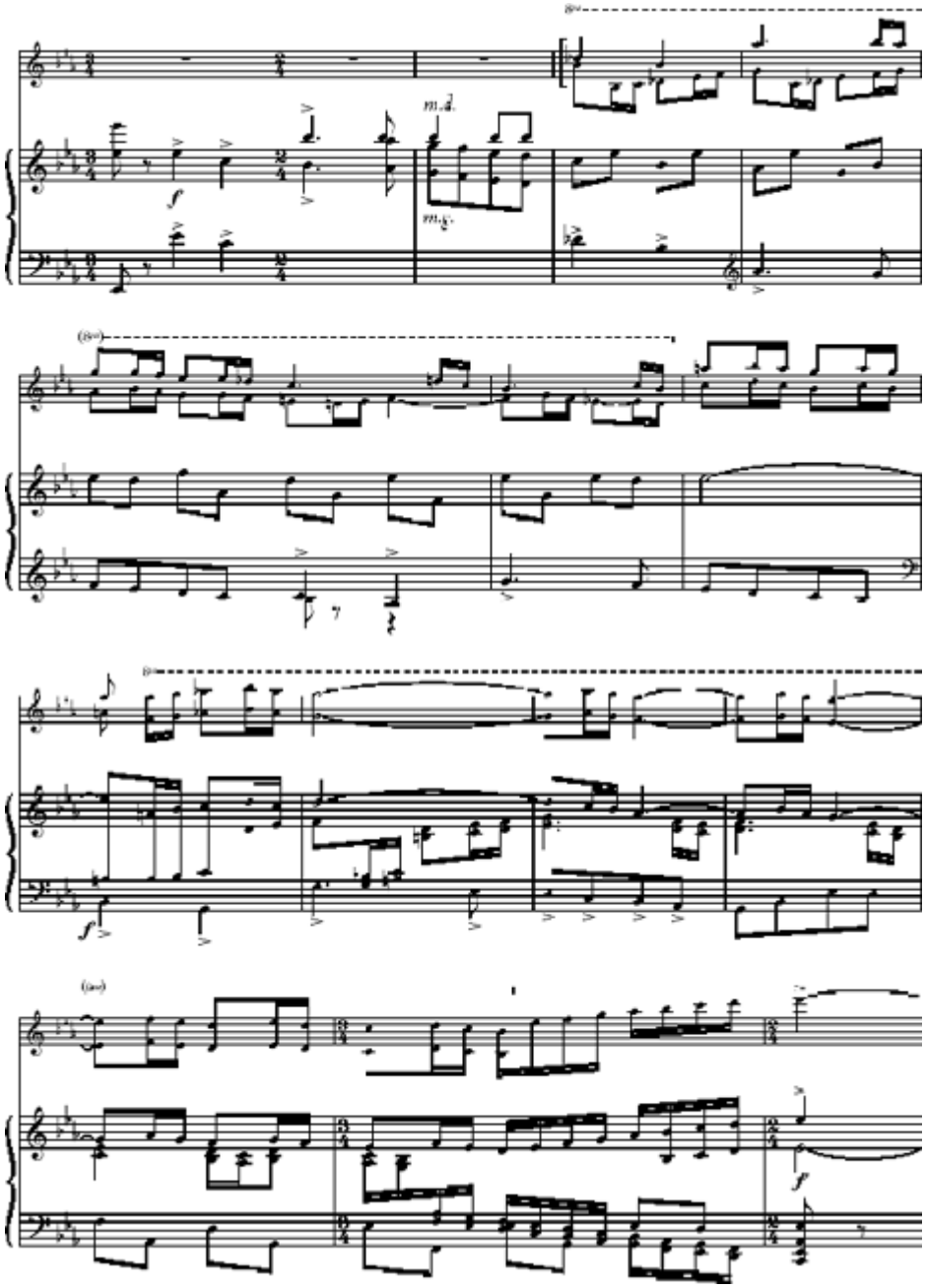
ex. 8-11a Igor Stravinsky, *Octet for Winds* in Arthur Lourié's piano transcription, I, mm. 42–48



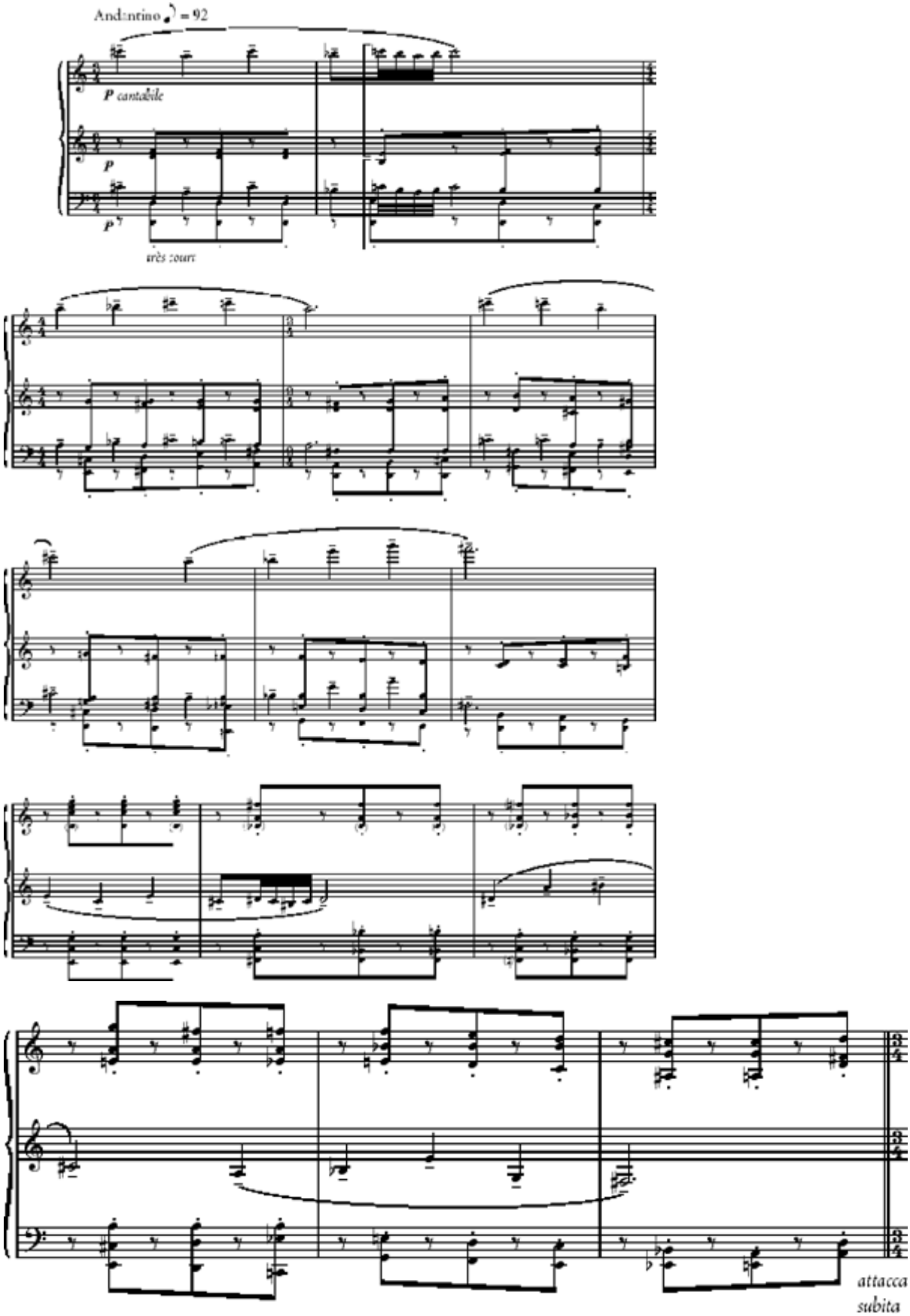
ex. 8-11b Igor Stravinsky, *Octet for Winds* in Arthur Lourié's piano transcription, I, mm. 71–74



ex. 8-11c Igor Stravinsky, *Octet for Winds* in Arthur Lourié's piano transcription, I, mm. 88–91

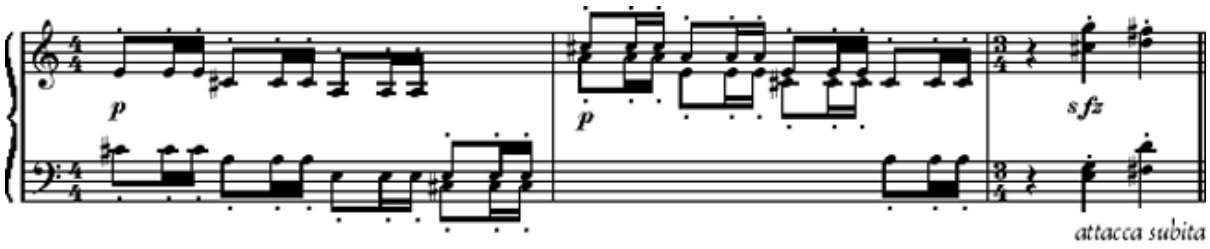


ex. 8-11d Igor Stravinsky, *Octet for Winds* in Arthur Lourié's piano transcription, I, mm. 137–151



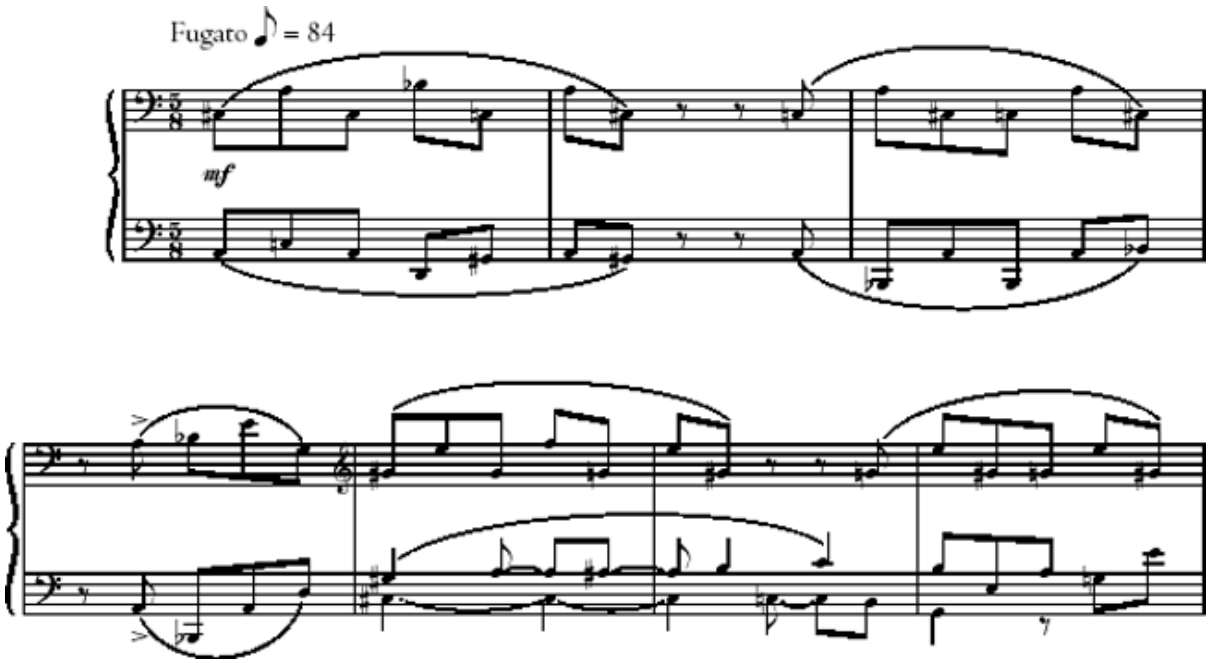
ex. 8-12 Igor Stravinsky, *Octet for Winds* in Arthur Lourié's piano transcription, II ("Tema con variazioni"), mm. 1–14

Of course no such scale was ever employed during the eighteenth century; again Stravinsky's "neoclassical" style shows itself to be no pastiche but an ironic mixture of styles in which everything is used with equal self-consciousness and nothing can be taken stylistically for granted. The ironic mixture in this case is especially obvious (and especially ironic) because the "pure" octatonic melody is accompanied in a straightforwardly recognizable D minor, a diatonic scale based on a tonic note that is not even present in the octatonic scale it is accompanying. Another joke, less arcane at the time, was ending the theme, on the last beat before the double bar, with a chord in the "normally" unstable second inversion (or position); the prank is repeated at the very end of the Octet, to show once and for all that it is only phonology and morphology that have been borrowed from obsolete styles, not grammar or syntax or any other "constructive principle."



ex. 8-13 Igor Stravinsky, *Octet for Winds* in Arthur Lourié's piano transcription, II, variation B, final cadence

Thereafter it is fairly unpretentious fun and games, very much in the untroubled spirit of the divertimento, the aristocratic party music of the eighteenth-century. What is marked "Var. A" is really a linking device (Stravinsky called it the "ribbons of scales variation") that comes as a refrain to connect the more elaborate "character" variations—that is, variations in the manner of recognizable genres. Variation B mimics a march, an inevitable choice for an ensemble dominated by brass. Its deadpan or "throwaway" final cadence (Ex. 8-13) must have especially unsettled early audiences who expected to have their ears clobbered by the composer of *The Rite of Spring*. Variation C is a waltz that metamorphoses smartly into Variation D, a polka, without the mediating link. The ribbons of scales return, however, to introduce the last variation (Ex. 8-14), which takes the small intervals of the theme and inverts them into large ones that give rise to more "Bachy" or "Baroquey" disjunct melodies already noted at the beginning of the Sinfonia.

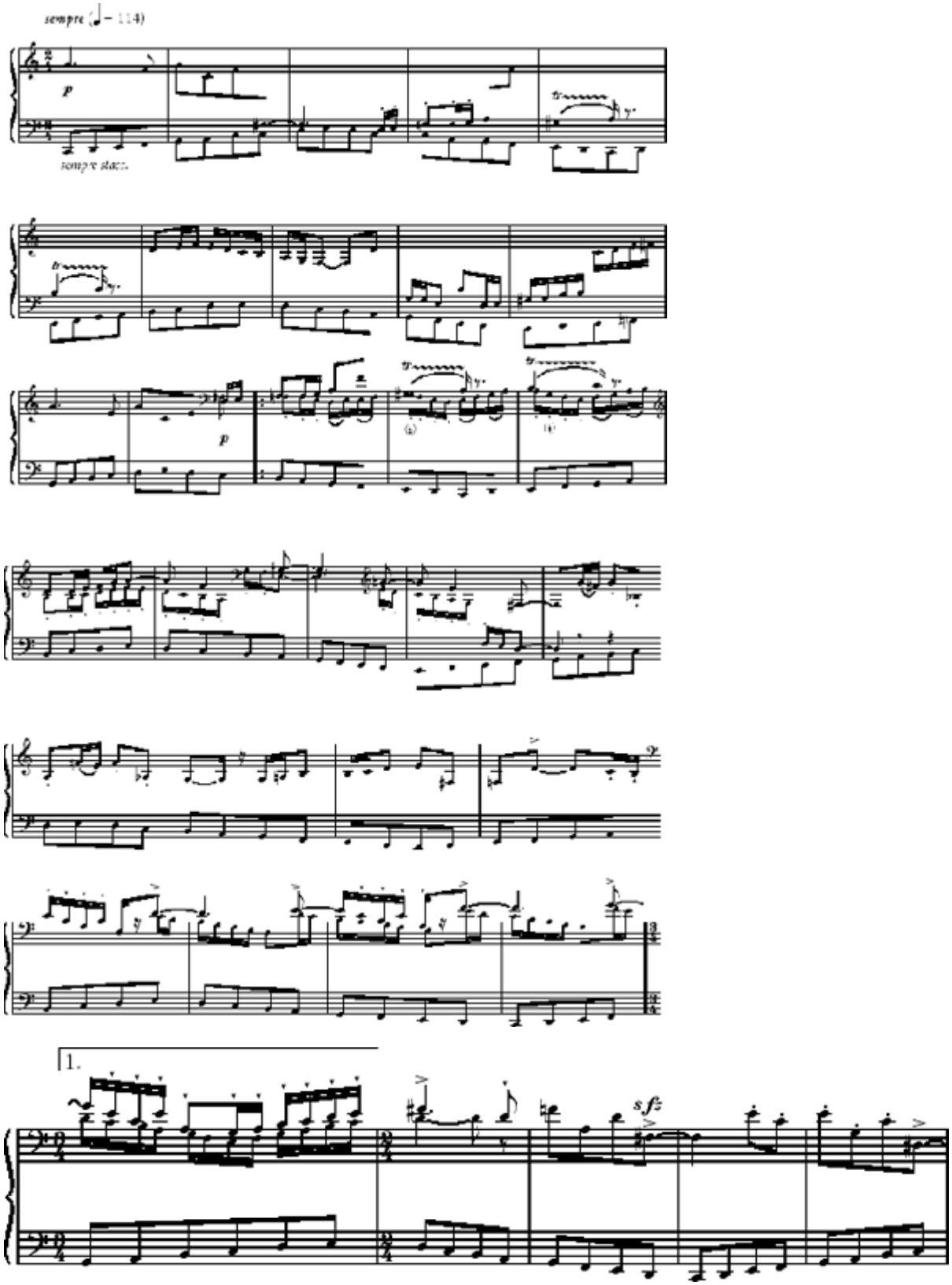


ex. 8-14 Igor Stravinsky, *Octet for Winds* in Arthur Lourié's piano transcription, II, variation E (fugato),

mm. 1–7

The Finale (Ex. 8-15) seems at first the most candidly "pastiched" movement of all, what with its walking bass, its resolutely contrapuntal manner, and even a couple of specific references to the Bach musicians knew best in the 1920s (that is, the Bach you practiced at the keyboard—see the first bassoon in mm. 20–22, which brings the first C-minor fugue from the *Well-Tempered Clavier* to mind). It is also the movement, however, that most ostentatiously refuses the syntactical norms of eighteenth-century (i.e., "tonal") music. The C-major scale in the second bassoon that marches up a tenth and down again for thirty-two measures at the outset is as inert an ostinato as anything in *The Rite*, and takes little notice of its contrapuntal partners. (Compare the two bassoons at the outset and at mm. 11–12: the same ingredients differently aligned but equally indifferent as to the placement of the dissonances.)

This earnest contrapuntal start is thereafter continually mocked and subverted. The first time the whole texture, chugging in the woodwinds, is made the accompaniment to an incongruously lyrical line in the brass. The last time (Ex. 8-16), the energetic Bachian anapests from the first movement, having built up toward what seems an inevitable climax, suddenly give way to the smooth, "cool," and unmistakable syncopated rhythms of American dance music, vintage 1923. The surprise had been telegraphed slightly, when the bass instruments (at the beginning of the example) assumed the "3 + 3 + 2" pattern endemic to Latin American dance genres like the Afro-Cuban rumba or the Brazilian maxixe. That rhythm, and its derivations, dominates the rest of the movement, finally in ironic counterpoint with a "Bachian" two-register tune, slowed down in the second trumpet to end the piece.



ex. 8-15 Igor Stravinsky, *Octet for Winds* in Arthur Lourié's piano transcription, III (Finale), mm. 1–33

This was not Stravinsky's first appropriation of American popular music, nor was he alone. He had included a "ragtime" in a little suite to accompany a dancing princess in *Histoire du soldat* ("The soldier's tale", 1918), a play with music based on a Russian folk tale, updated and translated into French, which he wrote in collaboration with a Swiss writer to make some quick money. Some indication of what such music meant to

Stravinsky, and to many other Europeans, at the time may be gained from another *Ragtime*, this one scored for an ensemble of eleven instruments, that he completed (or said so afterward) on the very morning of the Armistice that ended the Great War, 11 November 1918.

The American military presence in Europe from 1917, which turned the tide of the conflict and allowed it to end, made everything American wildly popular for a time. The going metaphor was borrowed from a familiar military hospital scene: New World giving Old a blood transfusion. America was young and vigorous. Its blood was healthy. Its exciting, novel, rhythmically infectious popular music was a symbol of that peculiarly determined postwar insouciance and dogged buoyancy. The use of popular music—traditionally ephemeral, humble, happy-making—fit perfectly with the new irony as well, teasing the inflated solemnity and the gaseous piety with which high art had been surrounded, and music most of all, in the prewar decades.

Strangely enough, it fit in perfectly with Stravinsky's Bachy style, too, as the ending of the Octet shows, and as can be readily explained "theoretically." The characteristic "baroque" rhythms—the walking basses, the energetic anapests—all involve eighths and sixteenths, values below the level of the *tactus* or "felt" beat (traditionally represented by the quarter note). They are, therefore, "subtactile" pulses. Ragtime and dance-music syncopations, too (what Stravinsky and other Europeans loosely called "jazz"), relied on a well-articulated subtactile pulse—that is, the little rhythmic subdivisions to which the accented long notes were shifted in the syncopated "jazz" style.

What is more, the rhythmic innovations of Stravinsky's "Russian" period—that is, the period of his maximalistic folk ballets—were based on equalized subtactile pulses as well. (Recall the shifting meters of the "Danse sacrale" in *The Rite*, which have nothing in common but the constant underlying sixteenth-note pulse that is often unexpressed on the lurching rhythmic surface.) It is this common rhythmic feature that allowed Stravinsky to draw, with facetious "objectivity," on such a wide assortment of seemingly unrelated idioms and yet have it all come out sounding "like Stravinsky."

Notes:

(33) Prokofieff to Nikolai Myaskovsky, 5 March 1925; *S. S. Prokof'yev i N. YA. Myaskovskiy: Perepiska*, ed. M. G. Kozlova and N. R. Yastenko (Moscow: Sovetskiy kompozitor, 1977), p. 211.

(34) Prokofieff to Myaskovsky, 4 August 1925; *Perepiska*, p. 218.

(35) Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Conversations with Igor Stravinsky* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959), p. 18.