

If one would identify the so-called Viennese School of modern music with atonality and twelve-tone-technique it would be right only in a narrower, more technical sense. Actually the issue which led this group of musicians throughout their struggles, defeats and victories is a much broader one. The main idea realized by Arnold Schoenberg, the head of this school, was to make music more music-conscious again, after the spectacular features of the high romanticism which connected music more and more with extramusical conceptions. I remember only the tendency of Richard Wagner who endowed practically every musical element with a symbolic significance. Later on the development of this tendency inaugurated a merely descriptive kind of music. A most characteristic representative of this branch is for instance Richard Strauss who displayed an extraordinary refinement in featuring extramusical conceptions by the means of psychological associations. But it must be alleged that the spiritual level of music was sensibly lowered by this sort of artistic methods.

However, the late romanticism contributed very much to the metamorphosis of musical means. Looking for always more refined means, it accomplished the definite decomposition of tonality which has been solidly established in the music of the earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century. Schoenberg began to study these changes of the musical material from a purely musical viewpoint. Thus one recognized ~~the~~ both of the sources from where he scooped his new ideas: with respect to the material he is strongly connected with the late romanticism, in regard of the technique he is linked with the last quartets of Beethoven whose classical tradition was set forth by Johannes Brahms when Schoenberg was young. [Schoenberg ~~was born~~ born in Vienna, 1874. He was a witness of the last struggles ~~around~~ around Richard Wagner, ending with the final victory of this man. On the other hand he was strongly influenced by Brahms who died in Vienna 1896, and by the lonesome and ambiguous genius of Gustav Mahler who started in this time to bewilder his contemporaries by his gigantic symphonies. The first important works of Schoenberg, like the ~~sextet~~ sextet "Verklaerte Nacht" and the immense oratorio "Die Gurrelieder", show still a strong adherence to the romantic idiom, yet a serious crisis announces itself already in the First String-quartet and in the Chamber-Symphony. The crisis becomes obvious in the Three Piano-pieces op. ~~11~~ 11 which caused to Schoenberg ~~his~~ soon the worldwide reputation of being a reckless destroyer of everything valuable in music and a dangerous madman.

What did actually happen? Schoenberg had proceeded from the very precarious state of the sensibly submerged tonality to the so-called atonality. That means technically that he abolished the main implements of tonality: the perfect triad, the definite key and the harmonic device of tonality, the tonal cadence. These elements have been the framework of every European music since the <sup>late</sup> ~~high~~ middle-age, everybody has become so accustomed to perceive music only by identifying its organization in these elements that it seemed nearly inconceivable that music should be able to exist outside of this sanctified framework. Even now, 30 years after these events, there are many people and especially critics who presume that the proceedings of Schoenberg were merely an arbitrary gesture of a man who was anxious to attract the general attention by some criminal deeds because he felt himself unable to produce orderly music. Such meanings are proved ~~as~~ malignant by every look to Schoenberg's earlier works. In fact, his decision to enter the realm of atonality was due to his conviction that nothing worthwhile could be created by using the exhausted means of tonality, and he was entirely conscious of the tremendous responsibility connected with this step.

Especially in Vienna, the dignified stronghold of the classical tradition, the resistance against Schoenberg's innovations was very substantial. His performances were always followed by indignant protests, the most amazing uproar, still remembered by frightened Viennese concert-goers, started in occasion of an orchestra-concert given by Schoenberg and his first pupils in 1911. The police had to separate the fighting adversaries in the concert-hall, and the ambulance was called in to take care of injured people. The main riot was caused by a lied by Alban Berg, one of Schoenberg's first pupils, ten years younger than his master. This composition which is famous for having evoked the biggest scandal in the whole history of music (and therefore never performed again) is at the same time one of the

shortest pieces of the literature. It takes hardly more than one minute. But the wild evolutions of the voice bringing out some very strange words, and the idea of using the full strength of a huge orchestra for such a small thing chocked the listeners incredibly. Both elements, the extravaganzas of sonority, the appalling contrasts and the shortness of the composition are very characteristic for this first state of atonal music. The contrasts are due to the intention of this school to increase the intensity of emotional expression, the shortness of the pieces to the fact that it was not yet possible to build up more extended forms in a musical language deprived of all means which guaranteed the unity of such larger extensions in the realm of tonality. (E Schoenberg op. 19)

Alban Berg followed especially the line of increasing intensity in the emotional field. In spite of his most exciting start he conserved imperturbably his fidelity to this heritage of the romanticism. His so-to-speak anarchic tendency found its climax in the Five Orchestra-pieces, later on it was mellowed progressively by his inclination for making his music proof against every kind of theoretical objections. In his unparalleled Master-piece, the opera "Wozzeck", he supplied the atonal idiom with the scaffolding of elaborated classical forms, in spite of the unbroken intensity of dramatic expression. In his last work, the Violin concerto, he tried even to reconcile atonality in some way with the essential elements of tonal music.

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Schoenberg reached the extreme degree of formal dilution in his one-act opera "Erwartung". It is the only exhibit of music of a considerable extension where the aim of establishing a formal unity by the means of thematic connection, of repetition or variation of certain elements, is completely avoided. From there Schoenberg occupied himself very intensely with the idea of endowing the new idiom with adequate implements for building up more extended ~~forms~~ and logically coherent forms. In this task he was especially followed by Anton von Webern, his second most important pupil, nearly of the same age as Alban Berg. The main characters of Webern's music are contraction and introversion. His flight from the surface of music to its inner layers is radical in such a degree that the sounding matter is nearly annihilated. The highest tension of expression is obtained by a minimum of means, by condensing musical developments to the smallest gestures. Webern has the unbelievable power to endow one single tone with the entire significance which, for being set forth in some other, more eloquent style, would need perhaps a whole extended movement. His music is, of course, very strange to listen to, and it was denounced as the merely intellectual concoctions of a degenerate brains. In fact this music has a very deep relationship to the very Austrian character, and it is not as bewildering as many people believe that the man who created it belongs to the offsprings of an old aristocratic family which used to live in a far remote place in the ~~Carinthian~~ Carinthian Alps. Who ever knew the appalling silence of the high mountains, the fallacious peace of a dreadful and ~~threatening~~ threatening nature, will remember it by listening to the utterly refined, thin and strange sounds of Webern's chamber-music. Of course, there is no relationship to the noisy, cheerful folk-tunes which coined the image of Austria all over the world. Nevertheless there is more truth about Austria in the music of the Viennese school. Austrians were supposed to be a harmless easy-going people, drinking, singing, dancing all their lifetime, lucky by their aloofness from all serious problems. This image was created by a commercialized operetta-industry and fostered by Hollywood producers. The tragic features of the fate of Austria hidden behind the ~~screen~~ screen of lingering smile, its amazing spiritual contradictions, ~~the~~ the loneliness of its geniuses, all that has been deliberately overlooked. But all of it is represented in the music of the Viennese school where fear and sadness caused by the decline of a world of value and beauty found a most ~~truthful~~ truthful expression. On the other hand, this music which is by no means national in the sense of a cheap folk-lore business is the only one which continues ~~in~~ intentionally the great tradition of the all-human, universal idea of classicism, and in this way

~~it is full of promises for a happier future of mankind.~~

When investigating the possibilities of creating more extended forms in the new material, Schoenberg inaugurated some years after the last war the so-called technique of twelve tones. That is a technical procedure by which the composer should be enabled to comprehend a greater number of the new elements as an orderly organized unity. It would take too much time and lead us too far into a lot of complicated technicalities if I would try to explain the whole complex of this technique. Nonetheless its primitive idea is simple enough to be told in two words and to be understood by everybody. As the harmonic facts which guaranteed the unity of the form in tonal music are missing in the atonal field, it is obvious that one has to look for another device serving the same purposes. The twelve-tone-technique finds it in the region of melody. The new unifying idea is built up by a twelve-tone-series, that means ~~that~~ a freely chosen succession of all twelve tones presented by the chromatic scale and containing each tone only once. This succession is the basic melodic pattern of the whole work which is intended and will be kept unaltered throughout its entire extension. Every mathematician can tell you how many millions of different successions can be built up by combining twelve different tones so we do not need to worry about being earnestly limited in finding out such twelve-tone-series. On the other hand, there are many possibilities of derived forms and transpositions of every single series so that one disposes of a lot of various combinations within every single work. As the series is kept unaltered during the whole composition which means practically that it is repeated all time, all musical elements of the work, melodies, chords and so on, must necessarily be established by the patterns presented in the primitive series. Of course, it seems that this technique is merely a mechanical device dwelling far below the layer of creative inspiration, but it does not indeed intend more than to secure the technical unity of atonal music, its spiritual unity, if there is at all, rests still upon the general character of the themes and its developments, upon the grandeur of its ideas and finally the creative power of the genius who wrote it, like in every other music. #.9. 4.8

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When Schoenberg had worked out this technique some 14 or 15 years ago the general appreciation of the Viennese school was subjected to certain changes. In its pre-war features this music had anticipated in some way the cataclysm which Europe should undergo afterwards, and therefore it had inspired its listeners with repugnance and awe. In the post-war period ~~re-~~ <sup>however</sup> ~~actionary~~ tendencies were growing <sup>up</sup> in all cultural endeavours very soon. The desire of restoring former happiness and of bringing into existence a new state of stability was very strong, especially in the victorious countries. Everywhere in the Western orbit composers hurried back to the models of historic styles - I do not want to remember more than the attitude of Strawinsky, a leading figure in these tendencies. The atonality set forth by the Viennese school was no more blamed because of its radical progressivity, because of its revolutionary destructive ideas, but denounced as old fashioned, as a product of ~~psychotic~~ a psychotic mentality, happily overthrown by a sounder attitude. Considering the magnificent accomplishments of this "sounder attitude" in the political field I think I can refrain from criticising explicitly the musical optimists who like so much to emphasize their superiority. Whereas atonal music was blamed in its beginning for having spoiled the beauty of the romantic epoch it is often despised today as a bad continuation of romantic traditions. In both of these <sup>assertions</sup> objections is some element of truth. Atonality has destroyed the language of romanticism, but by destroying it, it ~~was~~ rescued the very essence of romanticism, that is the intensity of expressing strong emotional feelings. It is just the rigidity of the construction which guarantees, quite paradoxically, the freedom of this expression. Compared with the streamlined features of the greater part of contemporary music, the atonal compositions might offer an appearance of introverted aloofness, of ~~that~~ constructive abstraction, and at the same time of old-fashioned intensity of feeling. Another curious ambiguity can be seen in the appreciation of this music from modern political viewpoints. Whereas

In the countries of its origin this music has been denounced as "Kulturbolschewismus". That is an entirely meaningless slogan, but nonetheless effective enough to make the life of atonal composers in their homelands intolerable. But if one would presume that this music which in the eyes of its enemies has so obvious revolutionary qualities must be praised for instance in Russia one would be completely wrong. Exactly the same atonal music which is banished in fascist countries as "Kulturbolschewismus" is exorcised by the soviets as formalism and rotten bourgeois business. But all that does not worry these composers. In spite of their small number and their limited popularity they are conserving and advocating the ideas of the Viennese school, without losing their confidence of being on the right way.

I personally did not belong to the Viennese school from the beginning although born and brought up in Vienna. I joined it much later, after having accomplished a great deal of important works. Therefore, and because I belong to a much younger generation than the group of composers who were the first to build up this school, my approach to ~~it~~ it and my behavior in its orbit are in some way different. In spite of using the twelve-tone-technique since about six years, I do not believe that here the last word is said with respect to the possibilities of composing in the atonal style. I think that a point will be reached where a strict application of this technique will no more be needed in order to build up even more extended forms. The achievements of this technique will become more or less self-evident, and we shall handle the new material with a greater freedom than now, without plunging back in the chaotic state of its beginnings. But I believe that the twelve-tone-technique will remain a most valuable ~~and~~ educational means for training young people who wish to write in the new idiom. It will replace, or rather continue, the exercises in the old medieval counterpoint which are until now the only and therefore the best method to acquire musical skill and handicraft.

After the war the Viennese school did not remain long time gathered as a group on the spot of their origin. Its main accomplishment in this time was the Association for Private Musical Performances in Vienna, founded by Schoenberg in order to present model performances of modern music. The concerts were not accessible but to the members, and besides the general program for the whole season it was never announced in advance which works should be played in every single concert. Thus Schoenberg would induce people to listen to the same new work several times, presuming that if they would ~~not~~ know a repetition being foreseen they would not ~~not~~ come to the concert. On the other hand, the rehearsals - often 30 and more for a difficult score - were open to the members so they had every opportunity to study the modern music thoroughly. Numberless unrivalled performances of every kind of contemporary music took place, and many ~~of~~ later world-known performers like the Kolisch Quartet started from this fanatically inspired workshop.

Today the Viennese school is scattered all over the world. Schoenberg who left Vienna for Berlin some years after the war came to this country when he could no longer work in Germany. He is living, teaching and working now in Los Angeles. Alban Berg died three years ago, not more than 51 years old. It was the most sensible loss for the group. Myself, I came over to this country last year and I decided to settle down here after Europe turned out to be not an adequate place for artistic activities of this sort. Some ~~members~~ other members of the school are living here and there, far remote one from the other. Webern is the only one who is still living in Vienna with a small group of pupils, most probably induced to remain silent. May we hope that all the migrations of these composers might contribute to make their ideas and works better known and to spread the insight into their earnest will of promoting the progress of our art.

*You know probably that he spent his first year in America at Boston, teaching on the Berklee Conservatory where I have the pleasure too to display my first teaching activities in this country.*

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can be seen*

It was very important indeed that Schoenberg extended his idea of a new musical consciousness also to the realm of reproduction. It is quite obvious that a musical style carrying on so deep-reaching changes of the whole musical language requested also a new kind of presentation. This fact was well known to all composers who tried to introduce a new musical idiom. Richard Wagner encountered the most stiff resistance as long as there were not enough <sup>(conductors,</sup> singers and instrumentalists trained to perform the claims of his new style. Not only the older people displayed a most reluctant attitude against his works, moreover they were simply not able to acknowledge clearly what claims has been advanced by the new music, and therefore their performances of it turned out as incorrect and not convincing. Later, when Wagner occupied himself to train entire generations of adequate performers, the situation changed very soon. The well known "Siegfried"-Motiv considered by the horn-players of that time as a model of unpracticable music is used today as an exercise for trombone-players handling a much clumsier instrument than the French horn. And while the first performance of Tristan in Vienna had to be cancelled after 54 rehearsals because the leading tenor was transported to a lunatic asylum where he died sometime later, the part of Tristan, still very difficult indeed, is mastered today even by average <sup>though</sup> singers at least in regard to its technical side. Like every new style also atonal music requires most carefully prepared performances. ~~When~~ If some well known classical music is performed without the last perfection it is of course a deplorable fact, but anyway the damage <sup>done</sup> to the work is not irreparable because the audience had and still has many opportunities to ~~correct~~ <sup>rectify</sup> their impression by listening to other performances or by remembering the image of the work lasting in their mind. Modern music presented in an insufficient manner is doomed to be misunderstood because nobody knows it better and nobody can compare his present bad impression with the right form of the work. As the atonal music renounces the accustomed features of tonality, such as symmetrically organized periods built up on the solid pillars of chords it is necessary to over-emphasize the articulation of this music ~~by~~ performing it. The player has to develop the keenest consciousness of ~~the~~ <sup>together</sup> how the phrases are divided and how they are connected on the other hand. While ~~the~~ atonal music can be compared in some way with the structure of poetry atonal music reminds one more the character of prose. While ~~by~~ listening to a poem ~~the~~ the rhythmical regularity of the verses and the rhimes are helpful for the understanding prose requires a much ~~greater~~ <sup>greater</sup> emphasis of its structure in order to become clear and plastic. Wherever a performance of atonal music is meaningless and weak it is mostly due to the fact that these moments have been overlooked, and not always to the weakness of the work. Therefore the undertaking of Schoenberg to train good performers of the new music was most important. Unfortunately these activities were stopped too soon and thus the greater part of this ~~matter~~ <sup>task</sup> remains still to be done.

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