

Th402
Assignment 7

Serial and twelve-tone music

1. Read the online primer on twelve-tone and serial music. Read up to “isomorphic partitions”

Answer the following

1a: What’s the difference between a series and a row? What do they share in common?

1b: Can you make a matrix for a series, with the prime forms LR, the inversion forms TB, as with a row? Why or why not? If not, what do we use instead?

1c: In class we talked about early use of canon, P, R, I, and RI forms, and basing pieces on pre-existent melodies – all of which are similar to twelve-tone / serial practice. Do a little research on contrapuntal forms in “early music” and write a paragraph or two on the use of these contrapuntal devices – look especially for the music which Webern knew – that of Heinrich Isaac.

2. Stravinsky, Dylan Thomas piece

Label the remaining 5-note series forms on the “piano reduction” handout. How many forms of the series are used? (P4, I0, etc). Which ones have the same notes? Once we have labeled all the series forms, and noted which series have the same notes, and related the starting notes (E – Bb is T6, etc.), what do we do now to analyse the music “as music” and not as a formula.

Look at the song – how does Stravinsky use the idea of “ritornello” (returning passage) in the song?

3. Webern: Symphony no. 1, opus 21: first movement

Webern writes lots of “twelve-tone canons,” such as the two canons at inversion starting this piece. He also tends to use pairs of rows at the same “sum of inversion” or the same axis of symmetry. In this piece he uses A and Eb as the center of symmetry, so that the “sum” is 6. The row itself has “order invariance” in the sense that the first notes and the last note are related by T6, then the second and second-last-note, etc.. How is this possible? (using T6 related pitches in symmetrical order positions). So the row is a “non-retrogradable row.”

The movement is described as a sonata form – when you listen to the piece can you hear the sonata form divisions? Where is the recap? What form do you hear, if any?

If the row is non-retrogradable, what does it mean when Webern uses a palindrome in the development section? Does it go forwards and then backwards ?

The rhythm at the beginning of the movement is remarkable. Write out the “macrorhythm” – the attacks in each part all put into one “rhythmic” piano reduction – what do you notice?

Webern is often compared with pointillistic painters – take look at some Paul Klee and compare with this piece, and the klangfarben techniques. What is the painter analog of klangfarbenmelodie (define the term and then discuss in a paragraph.

Listen to the second movement of the Symphony – you’ve got the first part of the score. It’s a theme and variations – in a sense, all twelve-tone music is a kind of theme and variations – the variations form is as basic to the serial / 12-tone era as sonata form is to the high classical era. Look at the first few variations – how does Webern define a set of “variations” in a context that is basically as variation.