

# Eduqas A Level Music

## AoS E: Into the Twentieth Century

### Core Wider Listening: Webern

[Expressionism is] a term applied to prominent artistic trends before, during and after World War I, especially in the visual arts and literature in Austria and Germany. By analogy it may apply to music of that time, or more generally to any music, in which an extravagant and apparently chaotic surface conveys turbulence in the composer's psyche. (New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians)

“One must express *oneself!* Express oneself *directly!* ... Not all those acquired characteristics, but that which is inborn, instinctive.” (Schoenberg in a letter to Kandinsky).

Schoenberg's intense and disturbing monodrama *Ewartung* (1909) is the classic of **Expressionism**. This anguished piece, which depicts a woman becoming increasingly crazed as she searches for her lover in a forest, was written in the white heat of instinctive creativity, taking only three weeks to write.

Expressionism of this extreme kind was a relatively brief phase. In the 1920s Schoenberg a method of composing atonal music from transformations of an ordered series of the 12 notes of the chromatic scale. This 'twelve-tone' or **serial** technique provided a way of generating pitch material for composers who wanted to avoid the traditional language of tonality. Schoenberg's two most famous pupils (the three together are sometimes called the 'Second Viennese School', the first being Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven) followed him in this innovation. In practice it is hard to distinguish between Serialism and Expressionism when confronted with a brief extract that you haven't heard before, so these two styles are grouped together for listening purposes.

The basics of how the pitches are generated is as follows:

- The composer creates the *prime* by writing out all twelve notes of the chromatic scales used just once in an order of their choice. This **original** form of the row can, like all of the following, be transposed to start on any note of the chromatic scale.
- The *retrograde* is the **backwards** form of the row, which is constructed by starting at the end of the prime and working back to the beginning. Again, there are eleven transpositions, making twelve retrogrades in total.
- The *inversion* is the **mirror** form of the row. If the prime goes up a semitone, for example, its inversion will go down a semitone.
- The *retrograde inversion* is the **mirror** form of the row but **backwards**

Of Schoenberg's pupils, Webern applied the serial technique to his compositions particularly strictly and severely whereas Berg was much looser in his application and tends to write more traditional-sounding music.

**Listen out for:** high levels of dissonance, chromaticism and irregularity in general. This music often sounds deliberately anti-traditional.

#### Core Wider Listening Work

**Webern** wrote his **Quartet Op. 22** for violin, clarinet, tenor saxophone and piano for the 60<sup>th</sup> birthday of the architect Adam Loos. The music comes across as startlingly original, something that impressed both Schoenberg and Berg, but it was premiered in Vienna to the terrible reviews that usually accompanied Webern's works. The apparently erratic and unpredictable nature of this kind of music has become almost a caricature of modernism but Webern absolutely did not mean his music to come across as ugly or irrational. The composer is reported to have complained that an unmusical performance of one of his works come over as 'a high note, a low note, a note in the middle – like the music of a madman!'

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<b>Core Wider Listening Work: SERIALISM (and Expressionism)</b>	
<b>Composer</b>	Anton Webern (1883-1945)
<b>Work</b>	Quartet Op. 22 (1930)
<i>Essay introduction</i>	
<p>This quartet is highly unconventional in almost all ways. Its harmony, melody, rhythm and texture all break violently with tradition in their irregularity and unpredictability. The piece is, however, highly structured being written using Schoenberg's serial technique very strictly. Webern takes the 12 chromatic notes of the scale in an ordered row and bases all his melodic writing on its permutations (transposition, retrograde and inversion).</p>	
<i>Structure</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The only traditional aspect of this piece is the structure, which is loosely based on sonata form.</li> <li>• The exposition and development use the same forms of the row, although they are presented slightly differently (this perhaps equates to tonal structure in conventional sonata form)</li> <li>• the development explores other row forms</li> <li>• The introduction and are exactly symmetrical mirror versions of each other - the same row forms but the coda uses retrogrades so</li> <li>• Webern uses repeats and slight ritenutos to help mark the changes from one section to another</li> </ul>	
<i>Harmony and tonality</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of the row means that the music is maximally chromatic (i.e. if you choose even quite short passages they will contain all 12 notes of the chromatic scale)</li> <li>• The row eliminates the traditional hierarchy of scales and chords – no note sounds more or less important in the harmony than another</li> <li>• This lack of harmony means there is no sense of key or tonic. Although it begins and ends on the same note (Db/C#) neither this or anything else forma a tonal</li> <li>• The harmony is very dissonant with lots of seconds, sevenths and tritons</li> <li>• However, the writing is sparse, with mostly only one or two notes at the same time with some three-note chords and the very occasional four-note one</li> </ul>	
<i>Melody and rhythm</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Webern's choice of note order in the row emphasises its chromatic nature, with no diatonic patterns emerging (c.f. Berg violin concerto)</li> <li>• There are many large and awkward leaps in the melody (e.g. the violin leaping down two octaves and a third at the beginning of the development before leaping back up a major seventh).</li> <li>• The melody is also highly fragmented, with single notes and pairs of notes separated by rests. The most notes played consecutively is three.</li> <li>• In addition the melody rapidly switches from once instrument to another (<i>Klangfarbenmelodie</i>)</li> <li>• Because of its serial construction the melody is highly repetitive (e.g. the saxophone melody in bar 6 is a transposition of the opening violin material) but these repetitions are not obvious to the listener</li> </ul>	
<i>Texture and sonority</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The texture is basically polyphonic with even the piano treated as two melodic lines – one in each hand.</li> <li>• Webern makes extensive use of imitation. In particular, the opening, like much of the piece makes use of mirror canons – a staggered repetition of a prime form of the row with its inverse</li> <li>• The texture is very sparse, made up of fragments that only overlap by one of two notes. The resulting texture is sometimes called pointillism (little 'points' of sound)</li> <li>• The texture is very sparse, with mostly only one or two notes played at the same time with some three-note chords and the very occasional four-note one</li> <li>• The melody is fragmented across the ensemble, with each instrument only taking a couple of notes of the melody at a time. The result, in which the melody is subject to rapid changes of timbre, is called <i>Klangfarbenmelodie</i>..</li> </ul>	

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### Summary of form

#### Introduction (bb. 1-5)

- Mirror canon passes between instruments in *Klangfarben* melody (P11/I1)
- Introduces main rhythmic ideas that then dominate the piece
- Violin uses mute at the beginning - German is mit dampfer (mutes comes off in bar 17)
- Note the rapid alternations between arco and Pizzicato in the violin
- Note frequent changes of meter, which persist throughout the piece.
- The three main rhythmic cells that are used throughout the piece are introduced in these bars (opening three notes then two semiquavers and three semiquavers).

#### A – Exposition (bb. 5-15)

- Saxophone plays melody (P1/P7 overlapping on G at end of bar 10)
- Accompaniment is mirror canon passing between piano and violin/clarinet (P5/I7 & I1/P11)
- Webern specifies the direction in which two-note chords are spread using arrows (see b. 14)

#### B – Development (bb. 16-27)

- Starts with mirror canon (I10 / P2) passing between instruments
- Passing between instruments intensifies in bar 20 (P1/I11), reaching maximum textural density at the end of bar 22 (P0/I0)
- Bar 20 is a rare example of three notes sounding simultaneously – the resulting chord is highly dissonant, consisting of a C#, D and Eb.
- The violin plays its highest note in the piece in bar 22 (top C)
- Accompaniment is mirror canon passing between piano and violin/clarinet

#### A' – Recapitulation (bb. 28-37)

- Same row forms as in exposition but now with 'melody' (P1) distributed across top three instruments accompanied by piano in mirror canon on the other pairs of rows (P5/I7 & I1/P11).

#### Coda (bb. 39-end)

- The same as introduction but in retrograde and distributed differently across ensemble.

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## Main Row Forms in Webern Op. 22

The image displays four musical staves illustrating the main row forms in Webern Op. 22. The top staff shows the **Prime (original)** form with rhythmic markings:  $\uparrow 3 \uparrow 1 \downarrow 3 \uparrow 1$  etc. The bottom staff shows the **Inversion (mirror)** form with rhythmic markings:  $\downarrow 3 \downarrow 1 \uparrow 3 \downarrow 1$  etc. The right half of the image shows the **Retrograde (backwards)** and **Retrograde inversion (backwards mirror)** forms. Brackets labeled 'Prime' and 'Retrograde' connect the original and retrograde forms, while brackets labeled 'Inversion' and 'Retrograde inversion' connect the mirrored forms.

## Row forms presented in matrix

	I <sub>1</sub>	I <sub>4</sub>	I <sub>5</sub>	I <sub>2</sub>	I <sub>3</sub>	I <sub>11</sub>	I <sub>10</sub>	I <sub>9</sub>	I <sub>8</sub>	I <sub>6</sub>	I <sub>0</sub>	I <sub>7</sub>	
P <sub>1</sub>	c#	e	f	d	d#	b	bb	a	ab	f#	C	g	R <sub>1</sub>
P <sub>10</sub>	bb	c#	d	b	C	ab	g	f#	f	d#	a	e	R <sub>10</sub>
P <sub>9</sub>	a	C	c#	bb	b	g	f#	f	e	d	ab	d#	R <sub>9</sub>
P <sub>0</sub>	C	d#	e	c#	d	bb	a	ab	g	f	b	f#	R <sub>0</sub>
P <sub>11</sub>	b	d	d#	C	c#	a	ab	g	f#	e	bb	f	R <sub>11</sub>
P <sub>3</sub>	d#	f#	g	e	f	c#	C	b	bb	ab	d	a	R <sub>3</sub>
P <sub>4</sub>	e	g	ab	f	f#	d	c#	C	b	a	d#	bb	R <sub>4</sub>
P <sub>5</sub>	f	ab	a	f#	g	d#	d	c#	C	bb	e	b	R <sub>5</sub>
P <sub>6</sub>	f#	a	bb	g	ab	e	d#	d	c#	b	f	C	R <sub>6</sub>
P <sub>8</sub>	ab	b	C	a	bb	f#	f	e	d#	c#	g	d	R <sub>8</sub>
P <sub>2</sub>	d	f	f#	d#	e	C	b	bb	a	g	c#	ab	R <sub>2</sub>
P <sub>7</sub>	g	bb	b	ab	a	f	e	d#	d	C	f#	c#	R <sub>7</sub>
	RI <sub>1</sub>	RI <sub>4</sub>	RI <sub>5</sub>	RI <sub>2</sub>	RI <sub>3</sub>	RI <sub>11</sub>	RI <sub>10</sub>	RI <sub>9</sub>	RI <sub>8</sub>	RI <sub>6</sub>	RI <sub>0</sub>	RI <sub>7</sub>	

## Introduction: P1/I1 presented in mirror canon using Klangfarbenmelodie

The image shows a musical score for the introduction of Webern Op. 22, featuring a mirror canon of the P<sub>1</sub>/I<sub>1</sub> row form using Klangfarbenmelodie. The instruments are Violin, Clarinet in B $\flat$  (at concert pitch), Tenor Saxophone (at concert pitch), and Piano. The score is marked 'Sehr mäßig' and 'mit Dämpfer'. The P<sub>1</sub> row is shown in blue boxes, and the I<sub>1</sub> row is shown in red boxes. The two rows are presented in a mirror canon, with the P<sub>1</sub> row starting in the Violin and the I<sub>1</sub> row starting in the Tenor Saxophone. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support for the canon.

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Exposition: P1 presented in sax with accompanying mirror canon moving between instruments

The image shows a musical score for the Exposition section. It features four staves: two for the saxophone (top two) and two for the piano (bottom two). The tempo is marked 'rit. ... a tempo'. The first measure is marked with a red box and labeled 'P1'. A red box highlights the P1 motif in the saxophone part. A blue box highlights the mirror canon motif in the piano part. The mirror canon is shown moving between the two piano staves. The saxophone part also contains a mirror canon motif, which is highlighted with a blue box. The piano part contains a mirror canon motif, which is highlighted with a blue box. The saxophone part contains a mirror canon motif, which is highlighted with a blue box. The piano part contains a mirror canon motif, which is highlighted with a blue box.

Comparison of row presentation in Exposition and Development (P1 in red and mirror canon in blue)

Exposition

The image shows a musical score for the Exposition section. It features four staves: two for the saxophone (top two) and two for the piano (bottom two). The tempo is marked 'rit. ... a tempo'. The first measure is marked with a red box and labeled 'P1'. A red box highlights the P1 motif in the saxophone part. A blue box highlights the mirror canon motif in the piano part. The mirror canon is shown moving between the two piano staves. The saxophone part also contains a mirror canon motif, which is highlighted with a blue box. The piano part contains a mirror canon motif, which is highlighted with a blue box.

Recapitulation

The image shows a musical score for the Recapitulation section. It features four staves: two for the saxophone (top two) and two for the piano (bottom two). The tempo is marked 'rit. ... a tempo'. The first measure is marked with a red box and labeled 'P1'. A red box highlights the P1 motif in the saxophone part. A blue box highlights the mirror canon motif in the piano part. The mirror canon is shown moving between the two piano staves. The saxophone part also contains a mirror canon motif, which is highlighted with a blue box. The piano part contains a mirror canon motif, which is highlighted with a blue box.

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