ML 5336

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COLUMBIA
GUARANTEED HIGH-FIDELITY
MASTERWORKS

BERG: SONATA FOR PIANO, Op. 1
SCHOENBERG: THREE PIANO PIECES, Op. 11
KRENEK: SONATA NO. 3 FOR PIANO, Op. 92, No. 4

GLENN GOULD, Pianist

■ In 1908, a young man named Alban Berg produced a piano movement which must surely be considered among the most auspicious "Opus 1s" ever written. At the time Berg was 23, was completing his studies with the most demonic disciplinarian of the day, Arnold Schoenberg, and his work was in effect a graduate thesis. In consigning his apprenticeship to Schoenberg, Berg had made a wise choice. Schoenberg, for all his growing reputation as a radical, was in reality one of the least anarchic of musical theorists, and even at that time was as busily engaged in clarifying the laws of classical tonality as were his works in rupturing them. It was just such a personality that could wield influence upon the intense, fervently romantic, young Berg. From Schoenberg he learned that whenever one honestly defies a tradition, one becomes, in reality, the more responsible to it. He came to see that the molten flow of Wagner's melody was not necessarily irreconcilable with the architectural logic of Brahms.

And so he produced an Opus 1 which was as fine as anything he ever did (I am aware that this remark is open to contradiction) for the reason that here he possessed the perfect idiom both to accentuate his restless genius and to cloak his rather dissolute habits. This is the language of collapse and disbelief, of musical *weltschmerz*, the last stand of tonality betrayed and inundated by the chromaticism which gave it birth. It permitted Berg his ecstatic tensions, his sorrowful resolutions, his unashamed revelation of himself. It also indulged his weaknesses—the jacked-up sequence, the melodic line supported by chromatically sliding sevenths, the plagiarism of the whole-tone scale.

This sonata is nominally in the key of B minor, to the extent, at least, that it begins and ends within the fold of that signature and that the secondary thematic group pays a token homage in its three appearances by suggestions of A, E and B major respectively. But in between these points of tonal repose the harmonic texture is shifting continuously, and it is the more astonishing that despite the vaporous quality of the harmonic progressions, despite the fact that phrase after phrase resists root analysis, the work as a whole does convey fulfillment, does give the impression of great peaks and lesser crests, calibrated as carefully and achieved as inevitably as in music of a more orthodox nature. How then is this achieved?

First of all, by constructing within the melodic complexes a unity of motivic intension so firm, so interdependent as to lend a complete coherence of linear flow. The opening three-note motif, for instance, is a central generative cell of the movement

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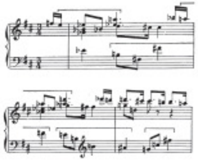

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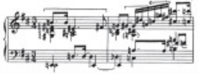


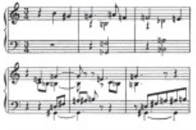
In this fashion, the horizontal relationships at least are given a common denominator.

But one cannot forever tolerate standing on a precipice, and such was the position of composers like Alban Berg in the early years of the century. The absolute limit of key relationships had been transcended. Chromaticism had so undermined the orbit of triad-governed harmonic progression that the only step remaining (if one were to continue in that direction) was to deny allegiance to the pivotal chord system of tonality—to deny the hereditary claim of the bass line as the embodiment of harmonic good conduct.

Schoenberg's first tentative steps into the world of atonality were taken with his second string quartet Opus 10, and affirmed by the three piano pieces, Opus 11, which appeared in the same year as the Berg sonata. There is little reason for these pieces to stand together, apart from the fact that each deals with aspects of the problems confronting Schoenberg at the time. The second piece, which was earliest in point of composition, strikingly emphasizes the transitional effects of tonal reminiscence. The third shows the Schoenberg who played with great thunderbolts of tone-clusters, sought pseudo-harmonic emphasis with octave doublings, indulged in the most extreme dynamic altercations, and tried to punctuate (perhaps to cadentialize?) the rhythmic structure with latent pauses and explosive apostrophies.

The first piece of Opus 11 is a masterpiece—a true successor to the finest of Brahms' Intermezzos. Like the Berg sonata it is spun from an inner cell of motivic ideas without particular consequence of themselves. This indeed is the fundamental distinction between this sort of compositional technique and that in which the melodic line (no matter how organically conceived) is given importance *per se*. Here the material is less important for what it is than for what it can become.

The first few bars of Opus 11, No. 1 serve to illustrate:



Regarded motivically, the first phrase breaks down into two easily definable motives of three tones each of which the second is an extension of the first—the A-F in bar 2 being an enlargement of the B-G sharp in bar 1. This motivic sequence with its subsequent augmentations and diminutions and its vertical representation as in bar 3 (lower voices) dominates much of the movement. Schoenberg, however, was already thinking over rhythmic groups as well as between them. Thus, between tones 2, 3 and 4, and again 3, 4 and 5, we have two other interval groups which bear mathematic correspondence to each other. In both groups the first interval has exactly half the span of the second, while tones 3, 4 and 5 together constitute an augmented inversion of tones 2, 3 and 4. In the lower voices one finds that this interval relationship of half to whole as in tones 2 to 4 and 3 to 5 has also penetrated. In the alto appear two retrogressive versions of tones 2 to 4, the second in inversion, and the bass proclaims an inverted retrogression of tones 3 to 5, while the tenor goes all the way with an augmentation (not an exact one, though) of tones 3 to 5.

The accompanying vertical synchronizations of these motifs—bars 2 and 3, second quarter note, and bar 4, third quarter note—do not, except for the superposition of tones 1 to 3, indicate any similar motivic penetration. These three chord structures are built on a declining ratio of intensity so that the melodic line is supported by a relaxation of dissonance—the diminished triad in the lower tones of bars 4, 6 and 8 producing an effect analogous to that of an elongated cadence. In discussing the harmonic (i.e., the vertical) aspects of atonality, one is confronted with problems which refute mathematical precision and demand, rather, more speculation than one can comfortably allow in analysis. Schoenberg was always aware of the fact that no interval system could ever fulfill its function with equal diligence in both dimensions simultaneously, but he devoted much thought to the problems of bringing the harmonic and melodic dimensions into accord—the accord of like relation to a preordered nucleus—and eventually came up with the idea of harmonically conceived interval groups. This was one aspect of his celebrated 12-tone period which occupied the last quarter century of his life. If there was one direction in which his experiments with 12-tone technique followed, it was the clarification of the harmonic responsibility of the row. From the first tone rows of 1924, which were rather like extensions of the opening of Opus 11, he gradually developed a technique of harmonic rows which figure more and more frequently in his later works — the piano concerto, the violin phantasy—and within which he constructed one work in its entirety—the "Ode to Napoleon."

The tone rows of works such as these were generally contrived to exhibit motivic combinations which intentionally limit rather than increase the available material. Most frequently this took the form of rows which neatly divide themselves in two, the second half providing in one way or another a reflection or duplication of the first half. Schoenberg revealed a partiality for rows which, when transposed and inverted at a given interval, would present as their first six tones the last six of the original row, and consequently as their last six, the first six of the original. Thus by using both rows simultaneously, it was possible to present the full 12-tone series within an interval span of only six tones, and thus to suggest the penetration of the horizontal series into the harmonic units of the composition.

No system, however, no matter how thoroughly developed and conscientiously adhered to, can do more than implement the more nebulous qualities of taste and good judgement in its practitioners. Among the hundreds of works strictly adhering to the tenets of 12-tone faith as understood and practised by their authors, only a handful give the impression that their form, their idiom, their vitality, indeed, their existence owe anything at all to the system which they employ. Few composers possess the discipline to express themselves freely and joyously within the confines of 12-tone writing. It is essential for a composer to treat his serial possibilities with an expansive extensibility and not regard them as representing an iron-bound code of honor. Within a framework of devout fidelity, it is the occasional deviation, the spontaneous expansion, the structural tenuto which is capable of attracting singular attention. It is the intentional infidelity to the provisions of the row which is capable of arresting the fancy, as is the drama of a fugal distortion in Beethoven, or the poignancy of a tortured cross-relation in the Elizabethans. With respect to all the ingenuity that can be plotted in advance, the moment of doing still issues its supreme challenge of inspiration.

■ Ernest Křenek's third piano sonata is possessed of this quality. Concerning his large and varied output for the piano, Mr. Křenek has written:

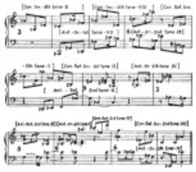
> "Ever since, in 1918, I wrote my "Opus One," a double fugue for piano, I have turned to that instrument time and again, when I was moved to test new stylistic or technical ideas. My early "atonal" style is reflected in *Toccata and Chaconne* (1922) my "romantic" period in the *Second Sonata* (1928). In *Twelve Variations* (1937) I summarized the experience of my first dodecaphonic phase. The principle of serial "rotation" with which I began to experiment in the *Third Sonata* paved the way to my present style of total serial integration."

The original row of this third piano sonata is composed of four segments of three tones each of which the first and last are fourth chords, and the second and third are fourth chords with one interval augmented.

Thus, this tone row may be seen to possess that symmetry which characterized Schoenberg's later serial combinations. However, while the potential of this triadic kinship is not overlooked as a means of harmonic reference, and the row's natural division into two complementary six-tone groups underscores what Mr. Křenek has referred to as the principle of serial rotation, the treatment of it is altogether different from the block-harmonic juxtapositions of Schoenberg's later 12-tone writing.

Mr. Křenek's gentler, more lyric style focuses attention upon the intermediary combinations within the row—those motivic groups centered around the joints of the fourth chord segments; hence, his use of the serial facilities is panoramic rather than static. In his division of the row into antecedent and consequent bodies, the 6th and 1st and the 12th and 7th tones are regarded as adjacent, and hence each half of the row is revolved upon this axis.

An example—the opening of the second movement ("theme, canons and variations") — will illustrate. The comments in parenthesis refer respectively to antecedent or consequent segments, the original, inverted, or retrogressive presentation, the number of the serial tone on which each segment begins, and lastly the numerals denote the distance of the transposition from that of the original row.



It will not pass unnoticed that certain suggestions of a centrifugal tonal scheme are present—of the thirteen presentations of the six-tone groups all but one either begin or end with A flat, as well as five with D flat, and four with B flat. The effect is, needless to say, not that of A-flat major, but the result is just as surely a secure if less definable polarity. The subtle interrelationships of these groups evidence a rare sensitivity to harmonic balance and order, and the most striking feature lies in the fact that with all the conscious control which is exercised the final effect is one of artless candor.

The sonata consists of four movements of which the first is a masterly sonata-allegro, the second—as its title indicates—an idyllic theme followed by a sequence of lucid canons and inquisitive variations, the third a frenetic scherzo, and the finale an elegiac and somewhat overdrawn adagio.

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■ Library of Congress catalog card numbers R58-1230, 51, 52 apply to this record.

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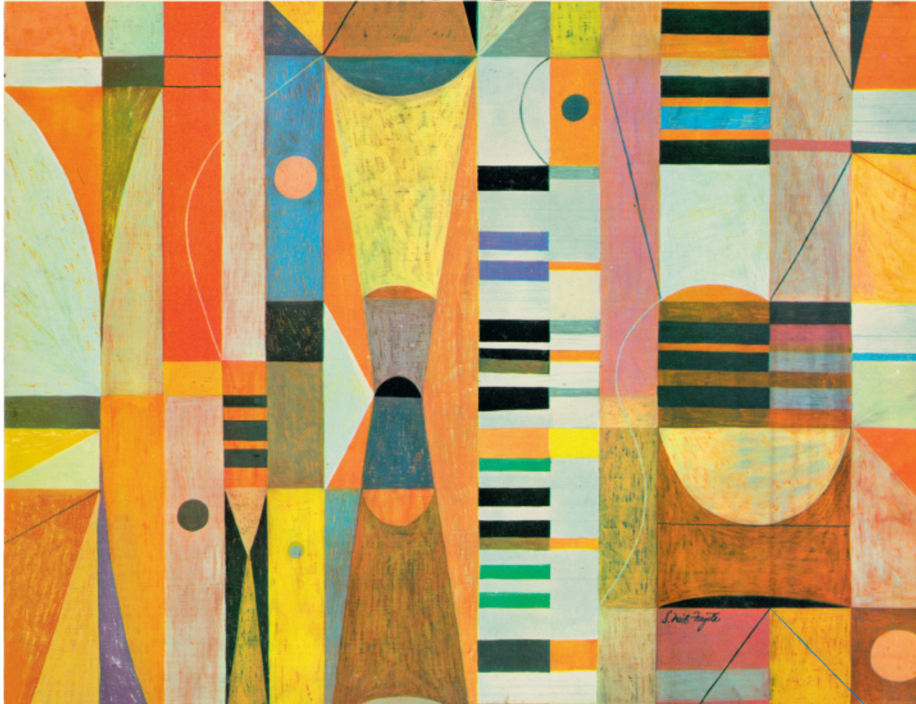
PIANIST



Alban Berg 1885–1935

1	**Piano Sonata** op. 1 Mäßig bewegt	12:57

Arnold Schoenberg 1874–1951

3 Piano Pieces op. 11

2	No. 1: Mäßige Viertel	4:11
3	No. 2: Mäßige Achtel	8:26
4	No. 3: Bewegte Achtel	2:34

Ernst Krenek 1900–1991

Piano Sonata No. 3 op. 92/4

5	I. Allegretto piacevole, animato e flessibile	4:43
6	II. Theme, Canons and Variations Andantino – Agitato – Allegretto	6:50
7	III. Scherzo. Vivace ma non troppo	1:33
8	IV. Adagio	6:47

Total Time 48:19

Glenn Gould piano

Original LP: ML 5336 · Released January 19, 1959
Recording: Columbia 30th Street Studio, New York City,
July 1, 1958 [1/5–8]; June 30 & July 1, 1958 [2–4]
Producer: Howard H. Scott
Publishers: Theodore Presser [2–4]; Associated Music Publishers [5–8]
Cover Art: S. Neil Fujita · Liner Notes: Glenn Gould
LP Matrix: xLP 44529 [1–4], xLP 44530 [5–8] (mono)

Schoenberg's 3 Piano Pieces were recorded in stereo and reissued in set M2S 736 (MS 6816/7) on April 18, 1966 (XSM 111567).

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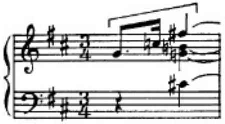

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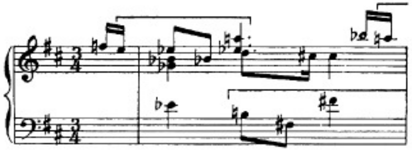

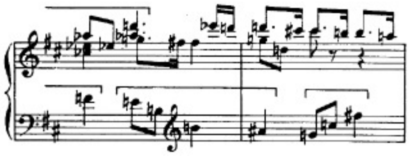

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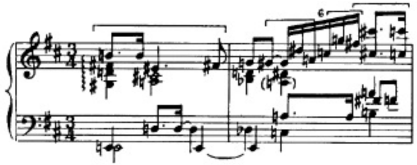

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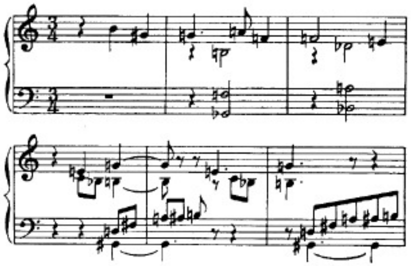

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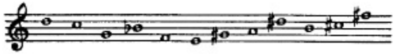

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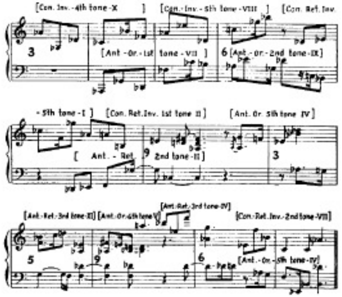

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