

Fluß der Ideen offengehaltenen Formkonzepts heben sich aus dem Zusammenhang der drei Sätze streng gegliederte Komplexe hervor, die den gewohnten Formvorstellungen durchaus nicht widerstreben. Die im Doppelkanon ausgeführte A-B-A-Form des Mittelsatzes ist allerdings auch wiederum nicht so plan wie sie sich auf dem Papier ausnimmt, weil sie durch die symmetrisch gegliederte Zentralpartie in zwei annähernd gleiche Hälften geteilt wird, die sich nur scheinbar wie Spiegelbilder zueinander verhalten. Der erste Satz ist siebenteilig (1-15/16-32/33-50/51-65/66-78/80-95/96-112), der dritte fünf-, beziehungsweise sechsteilig (1-15/16-25/26-37/38-[43/44-]53/54-68). In beiden Sätzen überschneiden sich Komponenten der Fugen- und der Sonatenform.

Ein etwas rätselhaftes Phänomen ist, daß das wörtliche Zitat des B-A-C-H-Motivs, so diskret es sich sonst auch gebärdet, immer nur an den entscheidenden Stellen des Formablaufs zum Vorschein kommt. Es wird im ersten Satz an dem Ort, wo der Eintritt des Themas zu erwarten wäre, im Krebsgang eingeführt (18/19, 1. und 2. Violine) und gleich darauf, wenn auch in losem Zusammenhang, von der ersten Stimme explizit hervorgehoben (23 und 26); dann taucht es, abwechselnd in der Original- und Krebsgestalt, am Anfang und Ende der beiden "Durchführungsteile" wieder auf (51/53, 1. Violine, 64/65, 2. Violine und Viola, beziehungsweise 66/67, 1. Violine und 73/75, 2. Violine) sowie an den korrespondierenden Stellen der "Reprise" (81/82, 94/95, 1. und 2. Violine). Im zweiten Satz verbirgt es sich in den Schlußtakteten der Mittelstimmen, und im dritten gehorcht es einem ähnlichen Impuls der Formdynamik wie im ersten (8/10, Violoncello, 13/14, Viola, 26/28, 2. Violine, 52/53, 1. Violine, 61/63, 1. Violine, 66/68, Violoncello). Wahrscheinlich ist des Rätsels Lösung in einer bestimmten Auswahl und Anordnung der Transpositionsreihen zu finden. Daß Webern sich aber gerade für diese entschieden hat, ist eher einer wohlwogeneren Absicht als einem Zufall zuzuschreiben. Denn Zufälle, die gibt es bei Webern nicht. Geheimnisse allenfalls, wie es sie schon bei Bach gegeben hat. Und die soll man gutverschlossen aufbewahren.

F. S.

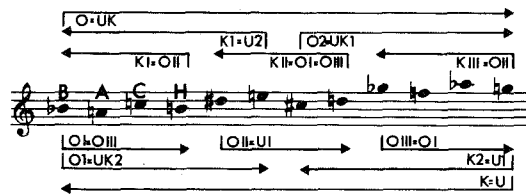
PREFACE

The letters Webern wrote over a period of roughly two decades to Hildegard Jone and her sculptor husband Josef Humplik (extracts are published in the little volume "Anton Webern, Briefe an Hildegard Jone und Josef Humplik", Vienna 1959) contain revealing information about the chronology of his creative work. From Webern's remarks (they are usually quite terse) we can fix with some accuracy the genesis of Opus 28 and of each of its three movements. A letter of 3 February 1937 gives us the first clue: "I am doing a string quartet" is the laconic comment. This of course does not mean that Webern could not have begun work earlier. It equally does not mean that the piece was merely in the planning stage, for "doing" always indicated that Webern was hard at it. Exactly seven months later, on 2 September 1937, Webern announced the completion of the first movement, under the impression - still obviously fresh - that he had come to a "decisive point" in his work. Was this the 112-bar movement that was given the number 1 in the definitive 1939 edition, which position it justly continues to occupy? Or was it the middle 53-bar movement which according to René Leibowitz

("Schoenberg et son Ecole", Paris 1947) originally came first? The point is open to question, but it is perhaps of no importance in any case. 112 divided by 7 equals an average of 16 bars per month – from which Webern's present-day colleagues can still take an example. The other two movements, however, seem to have demanded less endurance: Webern reported the completion of the next movement on 9 February 1938, and of the whole piece on 15 April of that year.

The psychological perspective that can be discerned in this surely stupendously protracted process gains further clarity and depth from a statement of 12 March 1938. On that day Webern wrote to his friends, "I am completely absorbed in my work and will not, will not be disturbed." 12 March 1938, as it happens, was the day Hitler's troops marched into Austria. Webern's demonstrative defensive stance was therefore doubtless justified. And there can be no question today that it was also justified by the subjective Archimedean motive of defending an autonomous realm of ideas. After all, Webern's String Quartet has outlasted several other "disturbances" since.

The model character that distinguishes the piece (and all of Webern's late works) is seen today in a different light than during the 1950s, when Webern was the rage and his principle of tone-row composition, re-interpreted as "serialism", was proclaimed as the dogma of a new "music of the future". The prototype read into it then is no longer so obvious as it was made to seem. What remains – and remains valid in all respects – can be defined as a model in the sense of a replica, not a prototype: the embodiment of a musical system of thought in the form of a highly stylized example that, like the Art of the Fugue, sets the seal on an epochal experience. Was Webern conscious of the analogy? That question must go unanswered. In any event, the reference to Bach is emphatic, and there must have been a more valid reason for it than merely a casual historical reminiscence. Moreover, it is not actually by the classic B-A-C-H quote that the reference is musically articulated, but, to a much higher degree, by the minute paraphrases of it in the basic elements that give the music its shape. Those paraphrases make the quote the object of a magic reflexion. In the multiple echoes of the paraphrased name, the reference comes to have the nature of an invocation. And what may appear at first, in its rudimentary shape, to be a simple construction formula, takes on the significance of an adjuration through the manner in which construction takes place. This is best illustrated by the row Webern invented for the Quartet (it is notated a major sixth lower in his sketch):



In this order of pitches the original row and retrograde inversion are identical, as are the inversion and retrograde; that is, the four basic modes coincide in the intervallic proportions of a single row. As the diagram shows, the six-tone and four-tone segments can likewise be interchanged, according to the rule of transposition and reversion. Inherent in this tight clinch between the whole and each of its parts, and between the parts themselves, is a relatively narrow range of variation in melodic structure. But this is irrelevant, for Webern's

point is precisely the presentation of analogies in every detail of the composition and, in turn, the presentation of the composition as a unified whole. The many instances of mirror and symmetry in the formal disposition of the three movements and each of their particles occur in exact conformity with that principle.

Strictly speaking, the melodic substance of the work consists only of the four tones of the B-A-C-H motive. That substance can be reduced still further, however, for the last two notes can be considered a transposition of the first two; thus admirers of overstatement could describe the composition, with good reason, as the product of a morphogenesis of two tones. With good reason, since Webern himself outlines a pattern of such figures in the fifteen bars of the introduction, by apportioning two-tone groups, drawn from the four-tone segments of the row, evenly and successively among the four parts. And when the two-tone groups return, a differentiation is made only as regards note values and displacement of rhythmic accents. (These intervals, however, must not be heard as isolated occurrences – the extreme spread of their boundary tones makes them virtually incommensurable in any case – but in the context of the four-part writing, for only then do they have a musically significant shape.)

The process of formation (which, as it were, objectifies itself in the Quartet) sets in with the second section of the first movement (bars 16–32) and leads via the defile of six-tone figures in canonic imitation (33–49) to a cautious approximation to the imaginary principal motive. As Leibowitz remarked, everything is theme. But one could equally claim that everything is variation. (Always the same and yet different every time – Webern's cardinal idea reaches its objective here.) Despite an apparently vague concept of a form kept open to a permanent flow of ideas, distinctly structured complexes stand out in the context of the three movements that are not opposed to accustomed ideas of form. On the other hand, the double-canon A-B-A second movement is not so plain as it looks on paper: the symmetrically built middle section divides the movement into two roughly equal halves which only seem to have a mirror relationship to each other. The first movement is in seven sections (1–15/16–32/33–50/51–65/66–78/80–95/96–112); the third movement can be said to have either five or six sections (1–15/16–25/26–37/38–[43/44–]53/54–68). Components of the fugue and the sonata intersect in both movements.

It is a somewhat puzzling phenomenon that the literal B-A-C-H quote, however discreetly it may behave, only ever puts in an appearance at decisive moments in the formal scheme. In the first movement it is introduced in retrograde at the point where the entrance of the theme would be expected (18/19, 1st and 2nd violin); soon afterwards, it is brought out explicitly by the 1st violin, although the connection between the notes is a loose one (bars 23 and 26); then it turns up at the beginning and end of the two "development sections", namely in 1st violin b. 51/53 and in 2nd violin-viola b. 64/65 (both retrograde), in 1st violin b. 66/67 and in 2nd violin b. 73/75 (both in the original form), as well as at the corresponding passages of the "recapitulation" (b. 81/82 and 94/95, 1st and 2nd violin). In the second movement the quote is concealed in the closing bars of the middle parts, and in the third movement it obeys an impulse of formal dynamism similar to that of the first movements (violoncello b. 8/10, viola b. 13/14, 2nd violin b. 26/28, 1st violin b. 52/53 and 61/63, violoncello b. 66/68). The answer to the riddle probably lies in a certain choice and order of row transpositions. But Webern's selection of precisely those rows is sooner a matter of intention than of accident, for accidents do not exist in Webern. Secrets perhaps, as they exist in Bach. And they should be kept under lock and key.

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STREICHQUARTETT

ANTON WEBERN, Op. 28

I

Mässig $\text{♩} = \text{ca } 66$

1. Geige

2. Geige

Bratsche

Violoncello

5

6

7

8 poco rit.

9 tempo

10

11

12

pizz.

f

sf

p

arco

f

pizz.

f

arco

pizz.

f

p

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13 *f* arco 14 rit. 15 tempo 16

17 *f* 18 *p* 19 *p* 20 pizz. *p* *f*

drängend 21 *f* 22 fließender $\text{♩} = \text{ca } 84$ 23 pizz. *f* 24 pizz. *f*

wieder mässig drängend

arco pizz. arco

25 26 27 28

Musical score for measures 25-28. The score consists of four staves: Treble, Violin I, Violin II, and Bass. Measure 25 has a treble clef and a 'più f' dynamic. Measure 26 has a treble clef, an 'arco' instruction, and a 'più f' dynamic. Measure 27 has a treble clef, a 'pizz.' instruction, and a 'f' dynamic. Measure 28 has a treble clef, an 'arco' instruction, a 'pizz.' instruction, and a 'più f' dynamic. The bass line starts in bass clef and changes to treble clef at measure 27.

29 wieder fließender poco rit.

30 31 32

Musical score for measures 29-32. The score consists of four staves: Treble, Violin I, Violin II, and Bass. Measure 29 has a treble clef and a 'più f' dynamic. Measure 30 has a treble clef, a 'pizz.' instruction, and a 'più f' dynamic. Measure 31 has a treble clef, an 'arco' instruction, and a 'ff' dynamic. Measure 32 has a treble clef and a 'poco rit.' instruction. The bass line continues from the previous system.

wieder fließender = ca 84

33 34 35 36 pizz.

Musical score for measures 33-36. The score consists of four staves: Treble, Violin I, Violin II, and Bass. Measure 33 has a treble clef, a 'pizz.' instruction, and a 'f' dynamic. Measure 34 has a treble clef. Measure 35 has a treble clef. Measure 36 has a treble clef, a 'pizz.' instruction, and a 'f' dynamic. The bass line continues from the previous system.

37 38 39 40

arco f pizz. sf

Detailed description: This system contains measures 37 through 40. It features four staves: two treble clefs and two bass clefs. Measure 37 shows a treble staff with a half note G4 and a bass staff with a half note G2. Measure 38 has a treble staff with a half note Bb4 and a bass staff with a half note Bb2. Measure 39 has a treble staff with a half note D5 and a bass staff with a half note D2. Measure 40 has a treble staff with a half note F#4 and a bass staff with a half note F#2. Dynamics include *f* and *sf*. Performance markings include *arco* and *pizz.*

41 42 43 44 arco

sf arco pizz. sf

Detailed description: This system contains measures 41 through 44. Measure 41 has a treble staff with a half note A4 and a bass staff with a half note A2. Measure 42 has a treble staff with a half note C#5 and a bass staff with a half note C#2. Measure 43 has a treble staff with a half note E5 and a bass staff with a half note E2. Measure 44 has a treble staff with a half note G#5 and a bass staff with a half note G#2. Dynamics include *sf*. Performance markings include *arco* and *pizz.*

45 46 47 48 molto rit. Dämpfer auf

più f pizz. arco sf p

Detailed description: This system contains measures 45 through 48. Measure 45 has a treble staff with a half note A4 and a bass staff with a half note A2. Measure 46 has a treble staff with a half note C#5 and a bass staff with a half note C#2. Measure 47 has a treble staff with a half note E5 and a bass staff with a half note E2. Measure 48 has a treble staff with a half note G#5 and a bass staff with a half note G#2. Dynamics include *sf* and *p*. Performance markings include *più f*, *arco*, *pizz.*, and *Dämpfer auf*. The tempo marking *molto rit.* is present above measure 47.

sehr mässig $\text{♩} = \text{ca } 56$

49 50 51 52

mit Dämpfer arco

Dämpfer auf

mit Dämpfer

pp arco *pp* *f* *f* *sfz* *p*

poco rit. tempo

53 54 55 56

pp *f*

mit Dämpfer

pp *f*

mit Dämpfer *pp* *f*

poco rit. tempo

57 58 59 60

f *f* *pp* *f*

f *sfz* *pp* *f*

f *pp* *p* *pp*

61 62 63 poco rit. 64

Musical score for measures 61-64. The score is written for four staves: Treble Clef 1, Treble Clef 2, Bass Clef 1, and Bass Clef 2. Measure 61 starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic. Measure 62 has a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. Measure 63 is marked *poco rit.* and has a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic. Measure 64 also has a *pp* dynamic. The music features various note values and rests across the staves.

65 - molto - - - wieder sehr mässig $\text{♩} = \text{ca } 56$
66 pizz. 67 arco 68 pizz.

Musical score for measures 65-68. Measure 65 is marked *molto*. Measure 66 is marked *pizz.* with a piano (*p*) dynamic. Measure 67 is marked *arco* with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic. Measure 68 is marked *pizz.* with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The tempo is indicated as $\text{♩} = \text{ca } 56$. The score includes various articulations and dynamics across the four staves.

69 70 71 poco rit. 72 tempo

Musical score for measures 69-72. Measure 69 is marked *arco* with a forte (*f*) dynamic. Measure 70 has a piano (*p*) dynamic. Measure 71 is marked *pizz.* with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic. Measure 72 is marked *arco* with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The tempo changes from *poco rit.* to *tempo*. The score includes various articulations and dynamics across the four staves.

73 *pizz.* *più f* 74 *arco* *f* 75 *arco* *f* 76 *pizz.* *p*

77 *poco rit.* *arco* *p* 78 *pp* *am Steg* *arco* *pp* 79 *Dämpfer ab* 80 *wieder nur mässig* *ohne Dämpfer* *pizz.* *f* *♩ = ca 66*

81 *ohne Dämpfer* *pizz.* *b₂* *f* 82 *arco* *p* 83 *f* 84 *b₂* *f*

85 86 87 88

89 drängend 90 91 wieder fliessender u. noch drängend bis 92

93 94 95 96 $\text{♩} = \text{ca } 66$ 97 ♩

wieder mässig

Dämpfer auf

Dämpfer auf

Dämpfer auf

Dämpfer auf

mit Dämpfer

98 99 100 101 102

poco rit. *tempo*

fp mit Dämpfer. *fp* *f* *p* *fp*

mit Dämpfer. *fp* *p* *f* *fp*

fp *fp* *p* *p*

fp *p* *f* *p*

103 104 105 106 107

poco rit. *wieder sehr mässig* $\text{♩} = \text{ca } 56$

f *p* *f* *f* *p*

f *p* *f* *pp* *f* *p*

f *f* *f* *pp* *f* *p*

p *f* *pp* *p*

108 109 110 111 112

poco rit. *tempo*

pp *pp* *pp* *ppp*

pp *pp* *pp* *ppp*

pp *pp* *pp* *ppp*

pp *pp* *pp* *ppp*

II

Gemächlich $\text{♩} = \text{ca } 56$

1 pizz. pp 2 pizz. pp 3 pizz. pp 4

5 sf 6 p 7 8 arco pp 9 poco rit. pizz. pp

10 arco 11 tempo, etwas fließender f 12 arco f 13 poco rit. pizz. arco 14 pizz. p arco p

wieder gemächlich

Bewegt $\text{♩} = \text{ca } 112$

15 pizz. *pp*

16 *ppp*

17 *morendo* arco

18 *ppp*

19 arco *fp*

20 *f*

21 *p*

22 poco rit. - tempo *p*

23 *f*

24 *f*

arco *fp*

arco *f*

arco *f*

arco *f*

25 *p*

26 poco rit. - tempo *p*

27 *f*

28 *fp*

29 poco rit. - tempo pizz. *p*

pizz. *f*

pizz. *fp*

arco *f*

arco *p*

tempo 30 arco V 31 32 33 V

f *fp* *piu f* *pizz.* *p*

f *pizz.* *f*

f

Detailed description: This block contains the first system of musical notation, measures 30 through 33. It features four staves: two treble clefs, one alto clef, and one bass clef. Measure 30 is marked 'tempo'. Measure 31 has an 'arco' instruction and a 'V' (breath mark) above the first treble staff. Measure 32 has a 'fp' dynamic. Measure 33 has a 'pizz.' instruction and a 'V' above the first treble staff. Dynamics include *f*, *fp*, *piu f*, *pizz.*, and *p*.

poco rit. 34 35 tempo 36 37 = ca 56

pizz. *pp* *arco* *pizz.* *pp*

arco *p* *arco* *sf* *pizz.* *pp*

arco *p* *pizz.* *sf* *pizz.* *pp*

Detailed description: This block contains the second system of musical notation, measures 34 through 37. Measure 34 is marked 'poco rit.'. Measure 35 has a 'V' above the first treble staff. Measure 36 is marked 'tempo'. Measure 37 has a tempo change to 2/4 and a note with 'ca 56' below it. Dynamics include *pizz.*, *pp*, *arco*, *p*, *sf*, and *pp*.

38 39 40 41 42

sf *p*

pizz. *pp* *sf* *p*

sf *p*

Detailed description: This block contains the third system of musical notation, measures 38 through 42. Dynamics include *sf*, *p*, *pizz.*, and *pp*.

poco rit. - - - - - tempo, etwas fließender

43 arco *pp* 44 pizz. *pp* 45 arco *pp* 46 arco *f* 47 arco *f*

poco rit. - - - - - wieder gemächlich

48 *p* 49 *p* 50a pizz. *pp* 51a pizz. *pp*

sehr rasch $\text{♩} = \text{ca } 112$

2 50b pizz. *f* 51b *dim.* pizz. *f dim.* 52 *p dim.* 53

III

Sehr fließend $\text{♩} = \text{ca } 112$ poco rit. - - - tempo

mit Dämpfer pizz. p arco pp tempo

mit Dämpfer pizz. pp sf tempo

mit Dämpfer pizz. pp arco f tempo

mit Dämpfer pizz. pp arco f tempo

5 poco rit. - tempo

arco poco rit. - tempo

arco poco rit. - tempo

6 poco rit. - tempo

7 poco rit. - tempo

8 poco rit. - tempo

9 poco rit. - tempo

10 poco rit. - tempo

11 poco rit. - tempo

$più f$ pizz. sf arco p tempo

$più f$ pizz. sf arco f tempo

$più f$ pizz. sf arco f tempo

12 *più f* *poco rit.* 13 *f* 14 *Dämpfer ab* 15 *pizz. pp*

più f *f* *p* *pizz. pp*

16 *tempo* *poco rit.* 17 *tempo* *poco rit.* 18 *tempo* 19 *tempo ohne Dämpfer*

am Steg... arco *Dämpfer ab* *Dämpfer ab* *Dämpfer ab*

ppp *p* *f* *pp* *f*

ppp *p* *f* *pp* *f*

20 *poco rit.* 21 *tempo* 22 *molto rit.* *tempo*

ohne Dämpfer *ohne Dämpfer* *ohne Dämpfer* *pizz.*

f *p* *pp* *pp* *f*

f *p* *pp* *pp* *f*

Musical score for measures 23-25. The score is written for three staves: Treble, Alto, and Bass. Measure 23 starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic. Measure 24 includes a *pizz.* (pizzicato) instruction. Measure 25 includes an *arco* instruction. The music features various rhythmic patterns and articulations.

Musical score for measures 26-29. The score is written for three staves: Treble, Alto, and Bass. Measure 26 starts with a *più f* dynamic. Measure 27 includes a *molto rit.* (molto ritardando) instruction. Measure 28 includes a *sehr bewegt* (sehr bewegt) instruction and a tempo change to $\lambda = ca 56$. Measure 29 includes an *arco* instruction. The music features various rhythmic patterns and articulations.

Musical score for measures 30-34. The score is written for three staves: Treble, Alto, and Bass. Measure 30 starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic. Measure 31 includes a *più f* dynamic. Measure 32 includes an *arco* instruction. Measure 33 includes a *pizz.* instruction. Measure 34 includes a *pizz.* instruction. The music features various rhythmic patterns and articulations.

35 poco rit. 36 37 38 gewichtig ♩ = ca 84 39 V

sehr bewegt ♩ = ca 56 40 41 42 wieder gewichtig 43

44 sehr ruhig ♩ = ca 112 45 46 poco rit. 47 tempo poco rit. - tempo 48

poco rit. - - tempo $\text{♩} = \text{ca } 112$

49 Dämpfer auf 50 51 52 $\text{♩} = \text{ca } 112$ pizz.

arco *p* pizz. *pp* Dämpfer auf *pp* arco *p* mit Dämpfer *ppp* arco *ppp* Dämpfer auf

poco rit. - - tempo des Anfangs $\text{♩} = \text{ca } 112$ poco rit. - - -

53 arco pizz. *ppp* 54 arco *f* 55 mit Dämpfer arco *f* 56 *p* pizz. *p* arco *p*

pizz. *ppp* pizz. *pp* mit Dämpfer arco *f* mit Dämpfer pizz. *p* arco *p*

-tempo

57 arco *pp* 58 *f* 59 *f*

arco *pp* pizz. *pp* arco *f* arco *f* pizz. *f* arco *f* pizz. *f*

poco rit. - - - tempo

60 61 62

più f *p* *f*

più f *p* *f*

più f *p* *f*

arco *f* pizz. arco *f*

più f *p* *f*

Detailed description: This block contains the first system of a musical score, measures 60 to 62. It features three staves: Treble, Alto, and Bass. The tempo is marked 'poco rit.' for measure 60 and 'tempo' for measures 61 and 62. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Measure 60 starts with a dynamic of *più f*. Measure 61 has a dynamic of *p*. Measure 62 has a dynamic of *f*. Performance instructions include 'arco' and 'pizz.' (pizzicato) for the strings.

63 64 65

ff *ff* *ff*

ff *ff* *ff*

ff *ff* *ff*

pizz. rit. -

pizz. arco *ff* pizz.

ff *ff* *ff*

pizz. *ff* pizz.

Detailed description: This block contains the second system of the musical score, measures 63 to 65. The dynamics are consistently *ff* (fortissimo) across all staves. Measure 63 has a dynamic of *ff*. Measure 64 has a dynamic of *ff*. Measure 65 has a dynamic of *ff*. Performance instructions include 'pizz.' and 'arco'. The tempo is marked 'rit.' (ritardando) for measure 65.

molto rit. - - - tempo

66 67 68

f *pp* *p*

f *pp* *p*

f *ppp* *pp*

arco *f* pizz. arco

f *pp* *ppp*

arco *pp*

Detailed description: This block contains the third system of the musical score, measures 66 to 68. The tempo is marked 'molto rit.' for measure 66 and 'tempo' for measures 67 and 68. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Measure 66 starts with a dynamic of *f*. Measure 67 has dynamics of *pp* and *ppp*. Measure 68 has a dynamic of *p*. Performance instructions include 'arco' and 'pizz.'.