

lived to pursue the direction of the nearly atonal passages in the Adagio of his Tenth Symphony. There is variety and range here, too: explosiveness (movements 1, 4), tenderness (2), serenity (3). Listening to it after viewing Schoenberg's paintings of the time one could conceivably conclude that the intensity of the paintings and that of the music are comparable. But one would also have to conclude that the music is the work of an artist in whom the possibilities are greater. This is as seamless and beautifully wrought a work as any produced in its day. Part of the effectiveness of the paintings, as unimprovable and riveting as they are, seems to result from the artist's having simply eliminated all he could not do. The author of Five Pieces for Orchestra is in complete command, holding power in reserve, with a myriad of options at his disposal.

In 1912, at his publisher's request, the composer gave the five movements specific titles:

1. "Vorgefühle" ("Premonitions")
2. "Vergangenes" ("The Past")
3. "Farben" ("Colors")
4. "Peripetie" ("Peripeteia")
5. "Das obligate Rezitativ" ("The Obligato Recitative")

In the Five Pieces for Orchestra the listener can sense what the composer meant when he said that an artist carries within him "the pulse of the world." The first movement's taut energy and instantaneous development of the tiniest of the ideas stated in the first few measures create a feeling of crisis, and a global more than a personal one. The headlong motion of the movement is due in part to the use of *ostinati* (short, obsessively repeating figures, often in the cellos and basses), the propulsiveness of the important dotted rhythmic motive, and the wild instability created by simultaneous layers of rhythmic ac-

LISTENING TO

FIVE PIECES

FOR ORCHESTRA

Of the works written between the Second String Quartet and the first twelve-tone essays of the 1920s, there are few that are not vocal and whose forms are not therefore, at least in part, determined by the course of the text. Of these the Five Pieces for Orchestra, op. 16, composed in 1909, are unique in approaching traditional concert length. One might choose these pieces to represent Schoenberg to an audience that is wary of him, not because they are "easy" to listen to but because of their obvious mastery and emotional power. (In fact, one New York Philharmonic subscriber died during the New York premiere of the work, which was conducted by Mitropoulos.) This is music of Mahlerian depth of feeling, music one could almost—almost—imagine Mahler himself writing had he

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tivity in 3/8 and 4/8. After the first twenty-two measures introduce the ideas in small instrumental groups, the remainder of the movement (105 measures) consists of a kaleidoscopic layering of these materials over one ever-present sustained chord (D-A-C-sharp). The explosion at letter 10, marked by the tam-tam stroke, pits a five-part eighth-note canon in the strings against quarter-note and half-note versions of the same tune in flutter-tongue trumpet and trombone. The ending suspends the sustained chord in growling flutter-tongue muted trombones and tubas with the main three-note ostinato of the piece in the cellos and double basses. This is both an ending and an upbeat. In fact, the whole movement, with the exception of the passage between 14 and 15, has the character of a leap in the air.

The second movement, drenched in memory and nostalgia, is where the leap lands. Its opening two phrases (A), grounded

Musical score for "Mühsige Viertel" (1. cl., 1. tr., 2. tr., 3. tr.). The score is in 3/8 time and features a sustained chord in the background. The melody is marked *pp* and includes a tam-tam stroke at the beginning.

by D-minorish tonality, open out into a brief subsidiary section (B) that floats over a pedal point F-sharp in the celeste,

Musical score for "Viertel etwas langsamer". The score is in 3/8 time and features a sustained chord in the background. The melody is marked *pp* and includes a tam-tam stroke at the beginning.

then sinks back into a reorchestrated statement of the beginning. A longer subsidiary section (C) ensues

Musical score for "J. = J. von Fröhner" (ppp). The score is in 3/8 time and features a sustained chord in the background. The melody is marked *ppp* and includes a tam-tam stroke at the beginning.

that develops all the melodic material previously heard, eventually reaching a quiet whirlpool of repeating figures that themselves derive from the same melodies: canons in the celeste, an ostinato in the flutes, and eventually a nine-part canon of staccato sixteenth notes in the winds. Then this subsidiary section is expanded further with its melodies in augmentation and inversion. The return to the opening (A) refers back to all of this, combining the essentials of the opening music with the F-sharp pedal and tunes of (B) and the ostinato figures and augmentations of (C), compressing many recollections into a single moment, as one can in a film montage. But how to describe the strange evening spell cast by this piece, with its mix of song and stasis, poignant string melodies and repeating lonely celeste figures? As I listened to it the other day, sitting in a parked car in my small town, schoolgirls getting off the bus passed me, chatting and giggling, then a mother with three children hurried by, a couple looked into the window of the Spectacle Shop, pointed to something, and entered. Bathed in the sounds of "Vergangenes," these sights took on a dreamlike sadness.

"Farben," with its overlapping reorchestrations of repeating chords, anticipates the strange meditative calm and radical simplicity of the last of the Six Little Pieces for Piano. But since the chords do change and "progress," the effect is also like that of a pulsating chorale or hymn. The method of reorchestration also progresses and changes. It is hard not to think of metaphors while listening. The overlappings suggest the inhalations and exhalations of breathings, or waves—with the same chordal rock washed by changing groups of timbres. An alternative title for the piece was "Morning by a Lake,"

and Schoenberg referred to this figure as illustrating a "jumping fish."



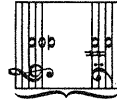
Perhaps this movement represents the closest the composer Schoenberg ever came to the painter Schoenberg. There is even a moment (between 4 and 5) when the "colors" seem to run into each other and smudge.

The jumping-fish motive stays at the same pitch in its upward and downward forms throughout the movement, often



joined by harp, celeste, or harmonics, creating an effect suggesting glinting light.

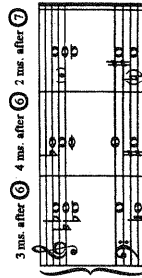
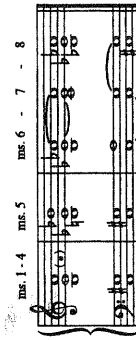
The first chord (which is also the final one) as well as the rest of the harmonies are new kinds of musical objects: chords



that would have previously been considered dissonant but that now give off a warm, stable, Rothkoesque resonance and move not because they have to but because they choose to. There are three phrases of chords with two moments of suspended activity. At first the piece seems to progress from one static point to another, pierced by twinges from the jumping-fish idea and a low-register two-note figure in fifths (which moves downward in steps over the course of the piece).



The first phrase ends with a version of the opening chord transposed down a whole step and held in the low register by four cellos and contrabassoon. In a moment reminiscent of the Adagietto in Mahler's Fifth Symphony, the harp picks out the pitches of this chord as the motion is resumed. In the second phrase, an undeniable forward tug is felt as the uppermost note of the chords inches to its highest point. The rate of the overlappings then increases and becomes rhythmically and orchestrally fantastically intricate (the moment of "running colors"), as the harmonies sink back to the opening chord once again. As this chord is sustained in harmonics, the two-note figure is heard in the flutes and clarinet and a derivation of it is played by piccolos, harp, and celeste. The third phrase is once again more rhythmically regular, but orchestrally remarkably subtle and luminous. The piece ends on the harmony with which it began. The final three chords almost form a palindrome with the first three:



The movement can be followed by listening to the soprano voice of its "chorale" only:

In movement 4 one returns to the crisis of movement 1. "Peripeteia" is defined as "a sudden change of fortune, in drama or in life" (*Oxford Concise Dictionary*). Here is a piece of music that would make an extraordinary interlude in an opera. The most heterogeneous of the Five Pieces in terms of characters, of ideas, and even, seemingly, of tempo (it sounds as if it is alternating between a fast and a slow tempo), it is actually in a single unchanging tempo and is made up of only a few basic ideas, of different rates of activity, strikingly varied and transformed. The three most obvious motifs are all heard piling on top of each other in the eruptive coda: a repeated-note figure, a slow-moving chromatic brass "smear" (as Robert Craft calls it), and a jagged ascending line (which is played at three different speeds in the coda). It is the frequent shifts in orchestration, rate of activity, and "mood" that give the movement its theatricality. Eight episodes can be easily discerned.

As exciting as the piece is in the context of opus 16, coming after two of the composer's most haunting creations, its effect is perhaps blunted. To this listener, at any rate, movement 4 becomes a revelation, listened to by itself.

After its most episodic movement, opus 16 ends with its most homogeneous one, a highly contrapuntal (generally five-to-six-part) organlike statement, in which the leading melodic line is passed continually from one register and instrumental group to another. The $3/8$ rhythmic pulse lends the move-

ment a tone of almost waltzlike regularity, of dailiness, at first, which makes the grandeur and prophetic intensity it amasses near the end all the more powerful. At its apex one feels as if the music is trying to burst its bonds, trying desperately to reach us. Then the urgency dies down and we are left with a hint of the overlapping chords of "Farben," ending in the world of that movement with a final exhalation on this sonority:

"The Obligato Recitative" exudes a terrible world-weariness.

If movement 2 represents "The Past," perhaps it is possible to think of movements 1 and 4 as the active "Present," and 3 as "Eternity" or "Timelessness." In this interpretation, movement 5 addresses "The Future."