

Five Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 16
By Arnold Schoenberg
Analysis by David Mitchell

Five Pieces for Orchestra by Arnold Schoenberg is an introspective piece. It does not use a tone row, but rather establishes a non-traditional harmonic language through motives. Schoenberg obscures the meter by tying across the bar lines. In *Fives Pieces for Orchestra*, Schoenberg demonstrates a clear understanding of the capabilities of an orchestra.

The five titles of each movement, Premonitions, Yesteryears, Summer Morning by a Lake, Perpetia, Obligato Recitative, suggest an introspective work. The preface says that is a look into a man's soul. There are moments of great tempest and moments of calm. Schoenberg has captured the emotional landscape of one's internal thoughts and emotions very well.

It is surprising that this piece is not based on a tone row because Schoenberg is known as the inventor of twelve-tone composition. *Five Pieces for Orchestra* is a good example of how you should not make assumptions about the compositional style of a composer. In *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, it is clear that he has left the traditional language and he is moving toward a twelve-tone harmonic language. He does this by establishing a harmonic syntax based on non-traditional intervals, chord structures, and chord progressions.

The motive that opens the first movement of this piece is very important. It establishes a set of intervals that become the harmonic language for this movement. In the first five measures, Schoenberg establishes this language and a set of motivic ideas that he will use consistently throughout this movement. He does this with very little

material. And his technique is a perfect example of how to expand melodic material vertically.

The strings play a descending figure in measures one to three that contains the following notes and intervals: D to C# (half step), C# to A# (minor 3rd), A# to B# (major 2nd), B# to A# (major 2nd), A# to A (minor 2nd). The first note and last note of the motive form a descending perfect fourth. This motive is doubled by the second violins a perfect fourth below.

In measures four and five, Schoenberg expands these intervals and establishes another set of intervals that are heard throughout the first movement. The notes and intervals that we find in measures four and five are as follows: A# to A (minor 2nd), A to G# (minor 2nd), G# to D (augmented fourth), D to A (perfect fourth). The first and last intervals of this motive form a minor 9th.

A comparison of the intervals in measures one to three with the intervals from measures four and five shows that Schoenberg has expanded the intervallic language in measures four and five. The half step A# to A that ends the first motive is expanded by dropping the A natural down an octave in the second motive. A# to A an octave lower becomes the framing interval for the second motive. The minor 3rd in the first motive is doubled to create an augmented fourth in the second motive between note G# and D. The second motive ends in measure five with a perfect fourth. This is the framing interval from the first motive in measures one to three.

Schoenberg has taken the opening motive that contained only half steps and a minor 3rd, and expanded it to create a second set of intervals that establishes the harmonic language of this movement. The intervallic language is: half step, whole step, minor 3rd,

perfect fourth, tritone, major seventh, and minor 9th. I've attached a copy of the first movement that contains my analysis.

Rhythmically, we see ties across the bar line throughout all five movements. There is a tied eighth note from the end of measure two to the beginning of measure three, for example. In the second movement, Schoenberg is consistently tying across the bar line. In addition, there are rhythmic motives that are carried throughout each movement. An example of his use of rhythmic motives is the double dotted figure in the second measure of the first movement. This rhythmic figure can be found on page three and in fragmented form throughout the movement. The accompaniment figure at the bottom of page three borrows this dotted rhythmic figure.

Also, Schoenberg is using well-established techniques like inversion, retrograde, elongation, diminution, and fragmentation. An example of his use of inversion can be found on page three of movement one. This example of melodic inversion is just above the previously discussed example of a rhythmic motive used by Schoenberg. This example of a melodic inversion shows how Schoenberg has inverted motive one from measures one through three. Also, just above motive one on page one in measure two, there is an inversion of motive one. This inversion is fragmented too.

Five Pieces for Orchestra by Schoenberg is an excellent example of techniques that we can use in our own compositions. Schoenberg's expansion of the opening motive of movement one to establish a non-traditional harmonic language for the movement is a technique that we can use in our own compositions.

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