

Cage at board. Morgan. \* 1227 5

Octaves on strong beats (3 or more dots) OK if  
 separates a leap of a 4th or more intervals.

~~10/2/36~~ Continue above example at board.

Examination of cases

Check possibilities systematically.

Possible as  
 version 1/2

Parallel movement least independent.  
 Hence, even parallel 3rd & 6ths are less desirable  
 than contrary or oblique.

Example 1. Leonard Stein, UCLA classroom notes, 28 September 1936.

dynamic process through which the composition unfolds, and the potential for imbalance inherent in the opening material. According to Schönberg, the composer initially perceives a musical idea in an instant as an “[u]nnamable sense of a sounding and moving space, of a form with characteristic relationships”.<sup>23</sup> After receiving this image of the work as a whole, as inspiration – “a lightning-like appearance of extraordinary duration”<sup>24</sup> – the composer is then faced with the task of making it concrete, a project that at best can only lead to an approximation of the ideal image. As Schönberg explained:

“[Composition] is a gamble. As when a dice-thrower relies on throwing the highest stakes. Certainly you must play well, but do you win at bridge with bad cards and without luck? Only one stroke of luck can help the chess player – a mistake by his opponent; everything else he must be able to do himself. The composer is better off: nine-tenths is luck, but only if he knows how to do the remaining tenth and has tried hard for eleven-tenths.”<sup>25</sup>

In this sense, at least, Schönberg overtly acknowledged the role that chance plays in the compositional process, an acknowledgement of particular relevance to the study of Cage’s response to Schönberg’s aesthetic.

Schönberg called the initial concrete articulation of a musical idea a *Grund-gestalt* which consists of striking intervallic and/or rhythmic motives stated at the beginning of a composition.<sup>26</sup> He defined the term “coherence” as the capacity to connect related or similar things with one another.<sup>27</sup> A motive is the smallest musical unit used to create coherence:

“In this way, the smallest musical gestalt fulfills the *laws of coherence*: the *motive*, the greatest common denominator of all musical phenomena.

Musical art, after all, consists of producing large and small images, which cohere by means of this motive, which in their individual contents likewise cohere with it, and which are assembled so that the *logic* of the total image is as apparent as that of its single parts and of their combination.”<sup>28</sup>

Schönberg strayed notably from the conventional metaphor that equates a motive with a seed from which a composition evolves, even going as far as to state that a given motive may yield more than a single piece:

23 Arnold Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea and the Logic, Technique, and Art of Its Presentation*. Edited, translated, and with a commentary by Patricia Carpenter and Severine Neff (New York 1995), 21.

24 R. Wayne Shoaf, “From the Archives: The Felix Greissle Collection,” in *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* 10 (June 1987), no. 1, 65–82. Cited in Arnold Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea*, see fn. 23, 375.

25 Arnold Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea*, see fn. 23, 91.

26 Ibidem, 169–171.

27 Ibidem, 147.

28 Ibidem, 149.

*"It will be noted that this departs from the usual understanding of the motive as germ of the piece out of which it grows. For if this conception were correct, only one single piece could arise from one motive. As is well known, such is not the case. I consider the motive as the building material that can assume and realize all forms."*<sup>29</sup>

He noted that, although a motive "stands in a certain relationship to what is presented," it has the potential for more than a single compositional realization. This approach is a significant departure from the determinism often associated with organicist aesthetics and became an important point of aesthetic convergence between Schönberg and Cage.

It is reasonable to infer that Cage was familiar with the principles and concepts presented in Schönberg's manuscript on the musical idea, since they were at the core of his teaching. Gerald Strang's class notes from the 1935 summer session, for example, document that Schönberg began the course by teaching that a composition should be perceived as unified whole, the expression of a single idea.<sup>30</sup> His students learned that while composing they should have "*the end in view, as a whole, clearly*," and should understand the developmental potentials of the materials (themes, phrases, and motives) as well as the necessity for variety and variation to sustain interest.<sup>31</sup> According to Strang, Schönberg differentiated between several types of repetition, such as repetition that was achieved without change, with variation (i.e., by changing the "setting" [range], harmony, or rhythm), and through developing variation.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Leonard Stein's class notes record Schönberg's classroom focus upon principles articulated in his manuscript on the musical idea. Variation is defined as "*change some features of a model but preserve some others. [...] Variation + repetition [are the] foremost tools for Coherence + Comprehensibility.*"<sup>33</sup> Stein's notes also contain Schönberg's clear distinction between "motive" and "idea":

*"Motive: composed number of features of rhythm + interval becomes motive in manner in which it is used. Manner of Use: varied or unvaried repetition. ('Motive idea of a piece': misunderstanding). [A motive is an] element which is used to express [a] musical idea, not [the] 'germ' of [the] piece – as composer does not compose from germ – [he or she] must know [the] length of [the] piece."*<sup>34</sup>

29 Ibidem, 151.

30 Schönberg used the metaphor of a "picture book" to explain this concept; like a "picture book," he explained, a musical work is "*a group of separate entities (ideas) [existing] effectively as a group, not solely as units. [The units are] distinct, complete in themselves, organized, but parts of a whole.*" Gerald Strang Collection, folders 45, 50 and 51 (USC classroom notes), see fn. 12.

31 Gerald Strang Collection, folders 45, 50 and 51 (USC classroom notes), see fn. 12.

32 Ibidem.

33 Leonard Stein Collection, folder 103 (UCLA classroom notes), dated 30 June 1936(?), see fn. 19.

34 Ibidem.

Cage's early compositions show a rudimentary knowledge of Schönberg's twelve-tone and atonal music.<sup>35</sup> Around the time that he first met Henry Cowell, Cage had been studying with Richard Buhlig, a pianist who had performed Schönberg's "Drei Klavierstücke," op. 11, in Berlin.<sup>36</sup> Although Cage's lessons with Buhlig lasted only a few months, it is reasonable to assume that they included aspects of Schönberg's twelve-tone method.

This is musically confirmed in Cage's "Solo for Clarinet" (1933) which he described "*as an unaccompanied chromatic work in three movements, the last of which, though not rhythmically, is a retrograde canon of the first.*"<sup>37</sup> The second movement uses a twelve-tone row, with its inversion, retrograde, and retrograde inversion.<sup>38</sup> The outer movements have a quasi-serial structure based upon melodic segments and their retrogrades.<sup>39</sup> For example, in the first movement, bars 1–2 and 4–5 reappear in retrograde form in bars 20–21 and 23–24 (compare Example 2a and b with Example 3a' and b').<sup>40</sup> Phrases a and a' have the same rhythm;<sup>41</sup> b and b' are retrogrades both in pitch and duration. Bar 6 reappears in bar 25, although not in literal retrograde (compare Example 2c with Example 3c'). The last two sixteenth-notes in bar 5 and all of bar 6 (Example 2d) as well as most of bars 7 and 8 (Example 2e) return either in retrograde or in their original form in the middle of the movement (Example 4d and Example 5d' and e). There are also similar correspondences between the middle and end of the movement. (Compare Example 4f, g, and h with Example 5f', g, and h').

35 It is important to point out here that Cage's first experiences of Schönberg's music and ideas were limited, and further, that these were mostly through an exposure to the work of others. Indeed, Cage was not the only American for whom Schönberg was a compositional inspiration. As mentioned above, Henry Cowell was an active Schönberg advocate, and the musical milieu that Cage joined after returning from Europe owed much to Schönberg's influence. (For more on Cowell's interactions with Schoenberg see, Sabine Feisst, "Henry Cowell und Arnold Schönberg – eine unbekannte Freundschaft," in *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 55 (1998), no. 1, 57–71.) In fact, while many composers in the American ultramodernist school – such as Cowell, Ruth Crawford, Charles Seeger, Carl Ruggles, and Johanna Beyer – sought to break their ties to European musical

traditions, their dissonant harmonies and experiments with serialism nonetheless attest to the impact of Schönberg's atonal and twelve-tone techniques. (Sabine Feisst examines the early American reception of Schönberg's works in her contribution to this volume, "Zur Rezeption von Schönbergs Schaffen in Amerika vor 1933," see 279–291.)

36 H[ans] H[einrich] Stuckenschmidt, *Schoenberg*, see fn. 12, 464.

37 John Cage, "Notes on Compositions I (1933–48)," in *John Cage: Writer*, edited by Richard Kostelanetz (New York 1993), 6.

38 Nicholls analyzes this movement and other early works by Cage, see David Nicholls, *American Experimentalist Music*, see fn. 7, 176.

39 Paul van Emmerik mentions this aspect of Cage's "Solo for Clarinet" in his doctoral dissertation, *Thema's en Variaties: systematische tendensen in de compositietechnieken van John Cage* (Ph.D., University of Amsterdam 1996), 31.

40 In this and subsequent examples, an accidental applies only to the note it precedes.

41 This leads van Emmerik to label bars 20 ff. a "varied reprise," Paul van Emmerik, *Thema's en Variaties*, see fn. 39, 31.

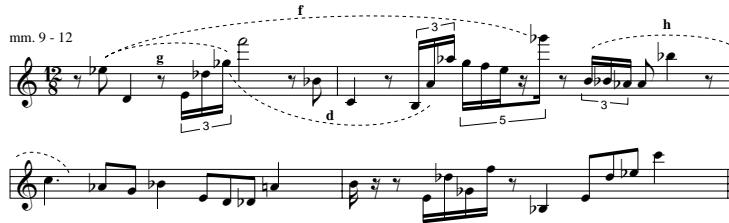
Example 2. John Cage, "Solo for Clarinet" (1933), I<sup>42</sup>



Example 3. John Cage, "Solo for Clarinet" (1933), I



Example 4. John Cage, "Solo for Clarinet" (1933), I



Example 5. John Cage, "Solo for Clarinet" (1933), I



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