Schoenberg's Serenade Op. 24

: From Serialism to 12-Tone Music

Jiradej Setabundhu*

We have seen in the first part of the analysis how atonality was gradually transformed into serialism in the first two movements of Schoenberg's *Serenade Op. 24.* Nevertheless, the serial technique found in both movements does not yet encompass all elements of the music. This is not surprising, considering that the concept was being formed while the composer worked on those movements. It is only in the later movements that we see extensive treatments of serialism that would become the hallmark of Schoenberg's post-1923 composition. The third and fourth movements of the *Serenade* mark the composer's departure from free atonality and his first attempts in strict serial composition and 12-tone composition. The analysis of these two movements should shed some lights on Schoenberg's techniques found in his later composition as well.

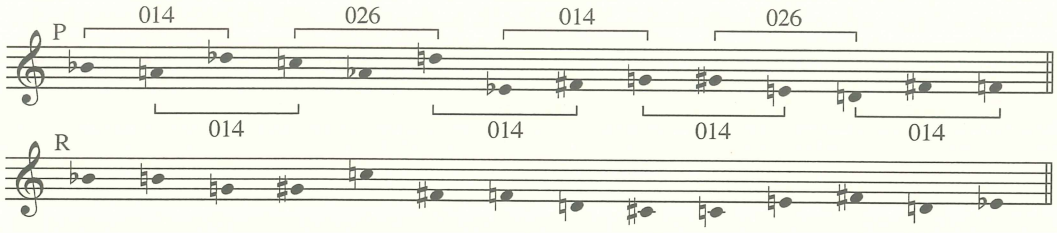
Movement III: Theme and Variations

Schoenberg once said that analyzing tone rows in his serial composition would not reveal any important understanding on his piece. Nevertheless, it is also true that forms and structures of music often dictate his choice of specific rows. This is especially the case with Movement III where the melodic and harmonic relationships are not the most important links between the theme and the variations. The variations in fact are related to the theme solely by means of tone rows, their permutations and placement in relation to the structure of the theme. In this light, we will first concentrate on the row usage of the theme and each variation, and afterward consider how Schoenberg created unity in this movement.

The Theme and Variations would have been the first twelve-tone composition but for the fact that its tone row consists of only eleven pitch classes – the B is missing and the D, F#, and Ab appear twice.

---

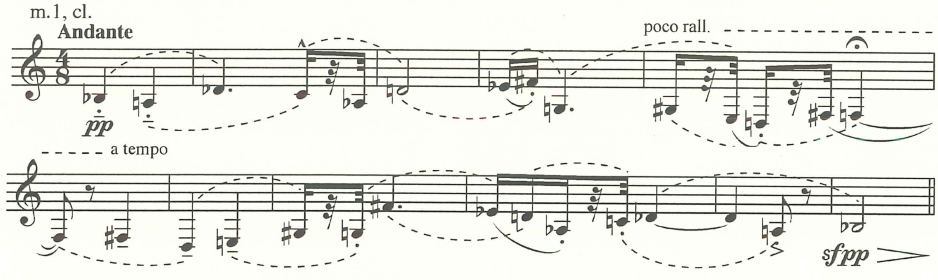
* อาจารย์ประจำวิทยาลัยดนตรี มหาวิทยาลัยรังสิต



Example 1: *The row of Movement III, its inversion and the 014/026 trichords.*

If the row is partitioned to trichords starting from the first note, the result will be an alternation of the 014 and 026 trichords. If it is partitioned from the last note, we have a series of the 014 trichord. These obviously draw relationship with the previous movements.

The theme is an unaccompanied tune played by the clarinet. Its two-part structure is presented musically by the *rallentando* leading to the *fermata* on the last note of the first phrase followed by a rest. This structure is emphasized serially by Schoenberg's use of the original row (P_0) to build the first phrase and the retrograde (R_0) for the second phrase[1]. By connecting P_0 and R_0 in this way, Schoenberg extends the 014/026 alternations and the series of the 014 trichord virtually throughout the theme.



Example 2: *The theme.*

Although the second phrase is melodically a retrograde of the first, the rhythmic patterns were not handled likewise serially. Instead, Schoenberg's treatment of rhythm in both phrases may be linked to a period construction common from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries with a similar rhythmic gesture at the beginning of both phrases. Additionally, the trichord division of the row is emphasized by the rhythmic grouping of measures 1-4.

All variations retain basic relationships to the theme structurally and serially. All are eleven measures, divided into two phrases of approximately five and six measures respectively, and make use of related serial permutations –prime, retrograde, inversion, retrograde-inversion, or simply repetition of rows in both phrases. The whole movement comprises of rows at transposition 0 only.

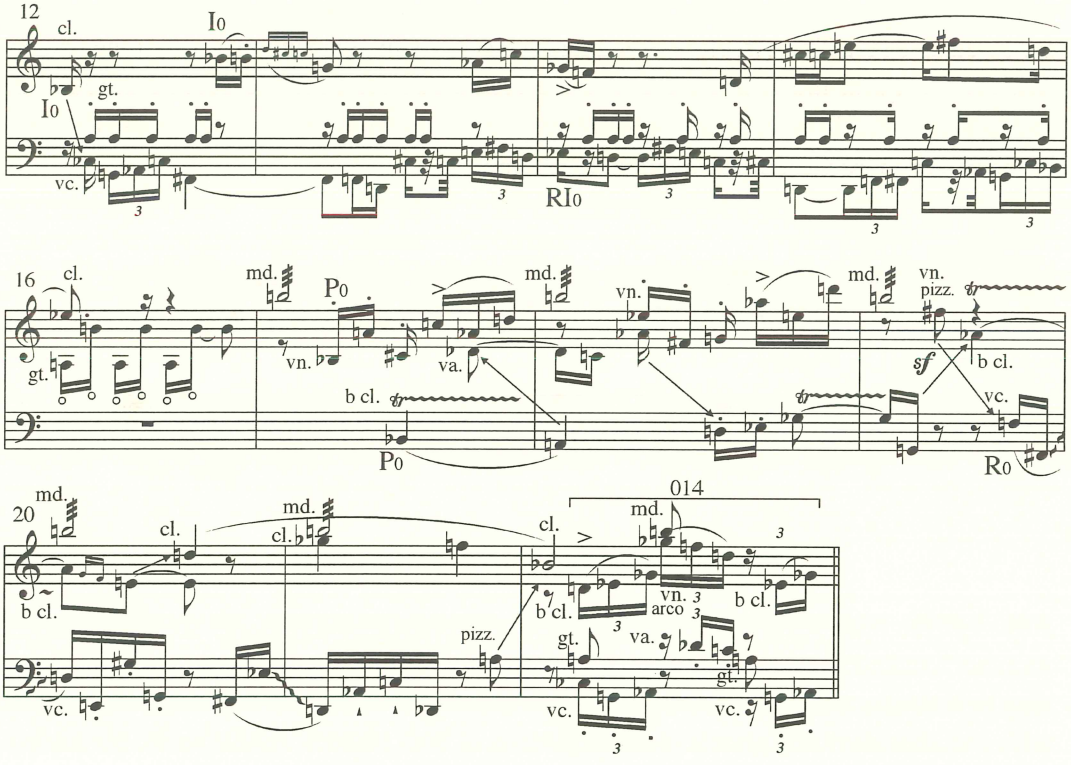
---

[1] *Transposition and inversion numbers are calculated around the Bb, the first note of the row.*

Variation I has a two-part polyphonic texture with pedal tones. The first phrase employs I_0, played by the clarinet (measures 12-16.) This melody is accompanied by the cello performing another set of I_0 followed by RI_0. The second phrase shows P_0 in the bass clarinet, viola and clarinet (measures 17-22), accompanied by another set of P_0 in the violin (measures 17-19) followed by R_0 in the cello (measures 19-21.)

The structural parallel between the theme and Variation I is quite apparent:

		1st phrase	2nd phrase
Theme		P	R
Var. I	(main row)	I	P
	(accom. rows)	I RI	P R^2



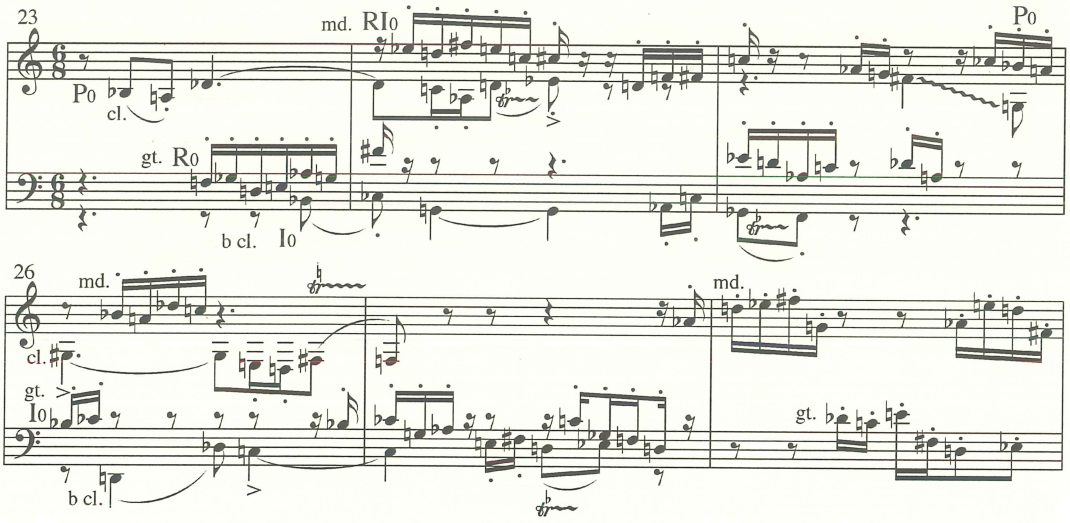
Example 3: *Row usage in Variation I.*

---

[2] *Although this distinction between the main row and accompanied rows in the second phrase is correct serially and structurally, it should be noted that musically Schoenberg referred to the violin/cello parts as the main melody and the bass clarinet/viola/clarinet the accompaniment.*

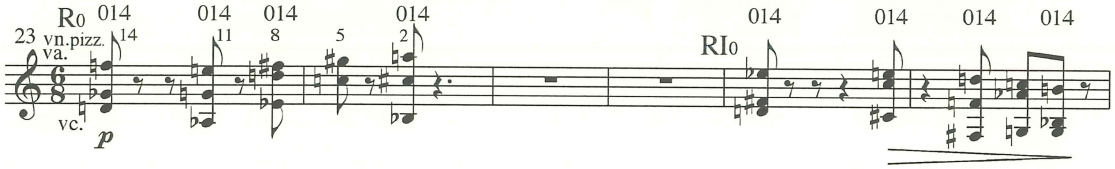
The last measure of Variation I contains fragments of P0 and I0, all of which are members of the 014 trichord, thus referring back to the theme and the original row. At the same time, they create a link to the next variation.

Variation II begins with a mirror canon between the two clarinets playing P0 and I0. The rows are divided into two seven-note groups separated by rests. This canon is accompanied by the guitar (R0 and I0) and mandolin (RI0 and P0.) While both instruments do not actually play a canon, their similar gestures consisting of many sixteenth-note *staccato* fragments are probably enough to create a pseudo-canon to deceive the ear.



***Example 4**: A canon and a pseudo-canon of Variation II, first phrase.*

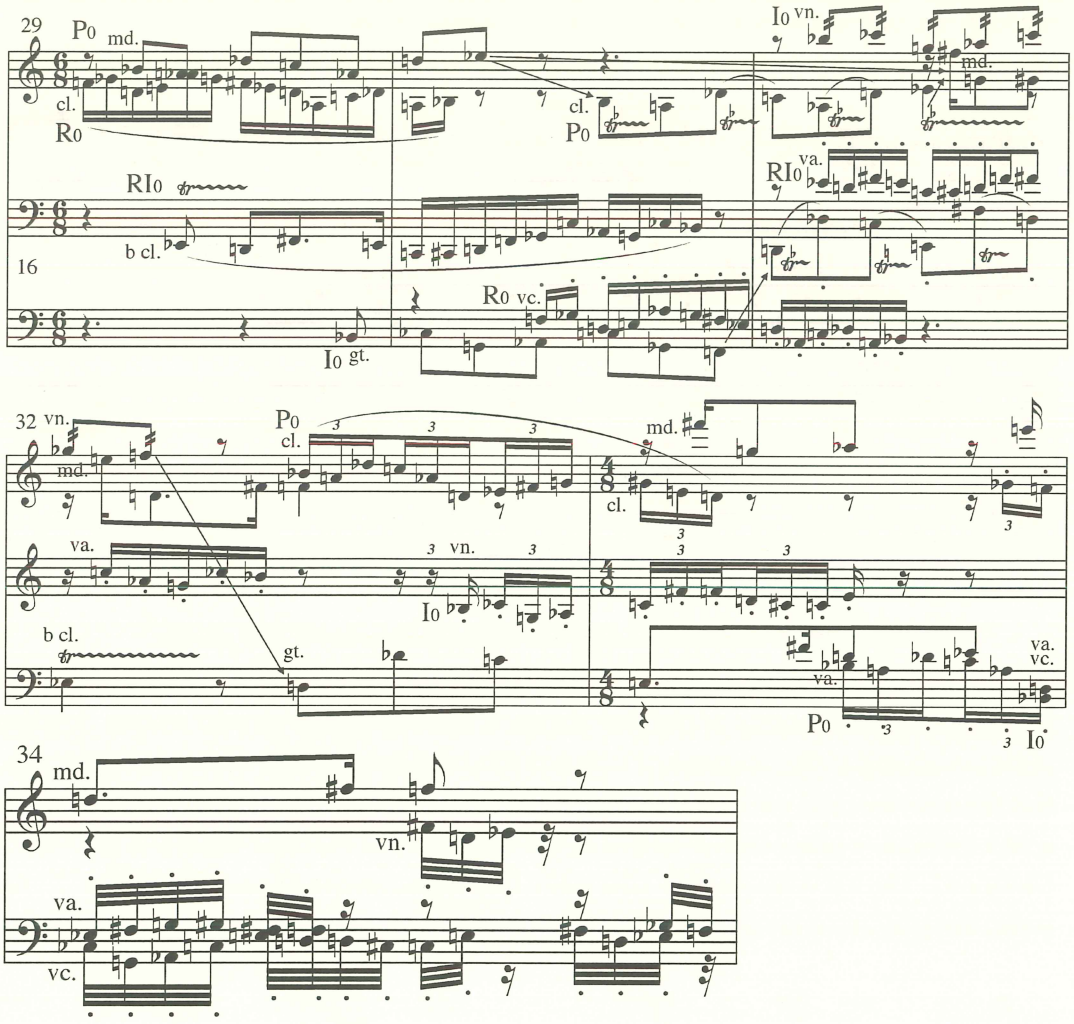
The beginning and ending of the first phrase is marked with a chordal texture in string *pizzicato* passages (R0, measures 23-24 and RI0, measures 27-28). Here is the first time that the rows are used vertically to form chords. Except for one instance, every chord forms a 014 trichord, a phenomenon related to the nature of the row and linking to the end of Variation I. The top voice played by the violin forms a succession of notes 14, 11, 8, 5, 2[3], the series that plays an important role later in Variation IV.



***Example 5**: Chordal passages in Variation II, first phrase.*

[3] *For simplicity, note numbers always refer to P or I form. Thus 1 is the first note of P or I and the last note of R or RI.*

Serially, the second phrase of variation II repeats the first, beginning with another mirror canon, now between the mandolin and guitar playing P0 and I0 (measures 29-30.) Here again the division of the row into two seven-note groups is achieved by rest notes and by the fact that the strict canon breaks after the rests. Similarly, the pseudo-canon between the two clarinets occurs right afterwards (measures 30-32.) Both instruments play similar gestures, rhythms and articulations, but the pitch collections are in fact notes 1-7 of P0 and notes 8-14 of I0.



***Example 6**: A canon and a pseudo-canon of Variation II, second phrase.*

The texture and the use of rows are more complicated here than in the first phrase due to more accompanying parts, creating a complex network of rows encompassing many instruments.

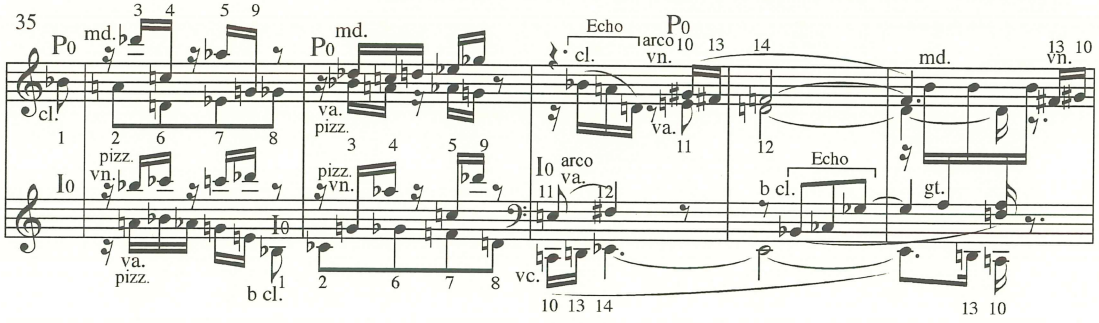
Additional rows occur toward the end of the second phrases with a tendency of acceleration, thus the overall motion from the combination of eighth notes and sixteenth notes to sixteenth note triplets and finally to thirty-second notes. The structural and serial relationships between the theme and Variation II are more complicated, yet the 2-part division is still clear.

1st phrase	**2nd phrase**
P:I (canon)	P:I (canon) , etc.
R:RI , P:I (pseudo-canon)	R:RI , P:I (pseudo-canon), etc.
R , RI (chordal)	R , RI , etc.

Schoenberg's handling of rows in Variation III is more ambiguous. The row is divided into two groups of nine and five notes. The first group, notes 1-9, is segmented and assigned between two instruments in the following manner:

Segmentation A	**Segmentation B**
1 2 6 7 8	3 4 6 7 8
3 4 5 9	1 2 5 9

The new five-note motif and its answer (clarinet, measures 34-35 and bass clarinet, measures 35-36) are the result of mapping Segmentation A to P0 and I0. The four missing notes appear in other parts —the mandolin (measure 35) and violin (measure 36.) Simultaneously Segmentation B of the other row is used as an accompaniment. The last five notes of the rows follow in measures 37-38 along with three-note echoes of the motif.



***Example 7**: Row segmentation in Variation III, first phrase.*

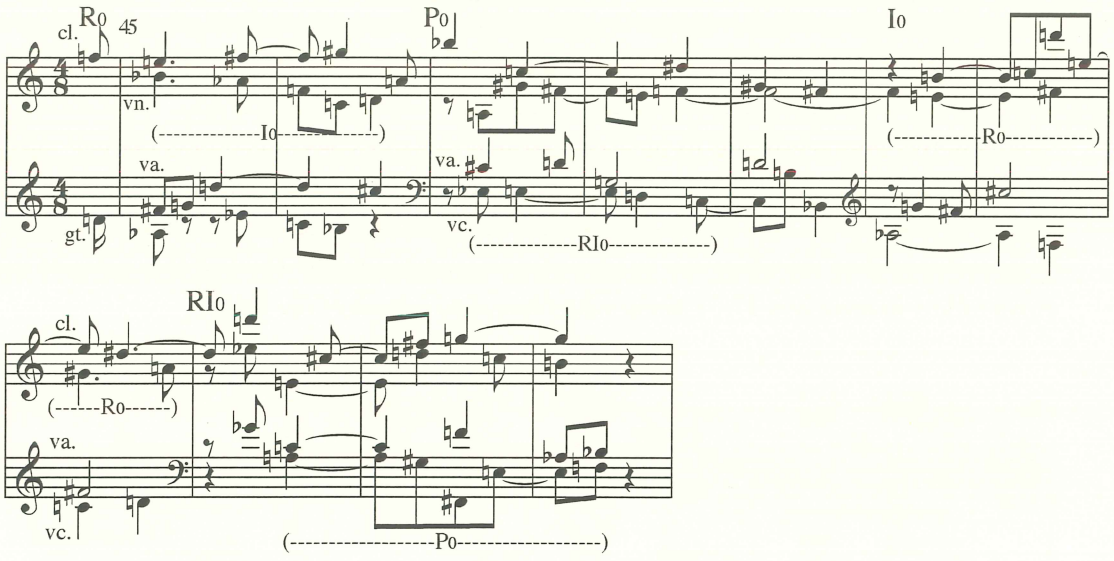
Similar treatments of rows appear in the second half of the variation, which is also built from P0 and I0. However, Segmentation B is now used to create the motif while the accompaniment is derived from Segmentation A (measures 40-41.) The last five notes of the rows followed in a more ambiguous order.

The schematic plan for Variation III may be summarized as below:

1st phrase	**2nd phrase**
P , I (Seg. A: melody)	I , P (Seg. B: melody)
I , P (Seg. B: accom.)	P , I (Seg. A: accom.)

Variation IV is closely related to the theme in its clear surface texture. However, the analysis shows that the simple use of rows conceals very complicated row segmentation:

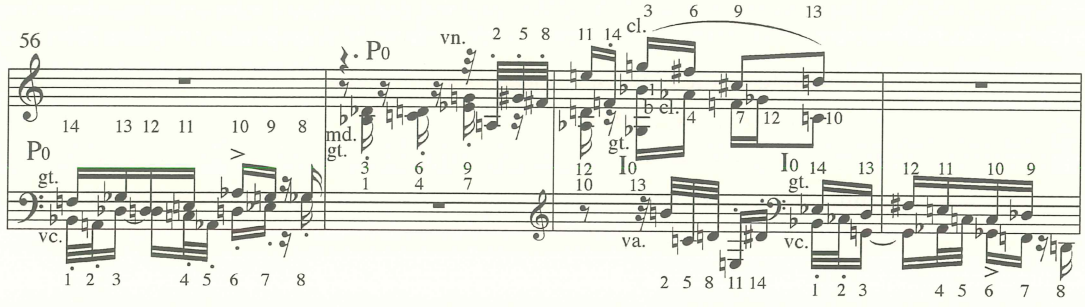
1st phrase		**2nd phrase**	
R	**P**	**I**	**RI**
14, 11, 8, 5, 2 (cl.)	2, 5, 8, 11, 14 (gt.)	2, 5, 8, 11, 14 (cl.)	14, 11, 8, 5, 2 (vn.)
12, 10, 7, 4, 1 (gt.)	1, 4, 7, 10, 13 (cl.)	1, 4, 7, 10, 13 (vc.)	12, 10, 7, 4, 1 (va.)
13, 9, 6, 3 (va.)	3, 6, 9, 12 (va.)	3, 6, 9, 12 (va.)	13, 9, 6, 3 (cl.)



Example 8: *Row usage in Variation IV.*

The idea of a retrograde form derived from the theme is apparent here. The middle two groups (P_0 and I_0) employ the same segmentation while the outer rows (R_0 and RI_0) utilize another set. To further support the retrograde concept, Schoenberg introduced retrograde fragments after the end of the first phrase in many instruments. (Compare measures 50-52 with measures 47-49.) Pitch order at the end of the second phrase is also a retrograde of the beginning of the first phrase (See measures 54-55, viola and cello, and measures 44-46, clarinet and violin). An interesting mirror canon happens between the clarinet and cello throughout the variation.

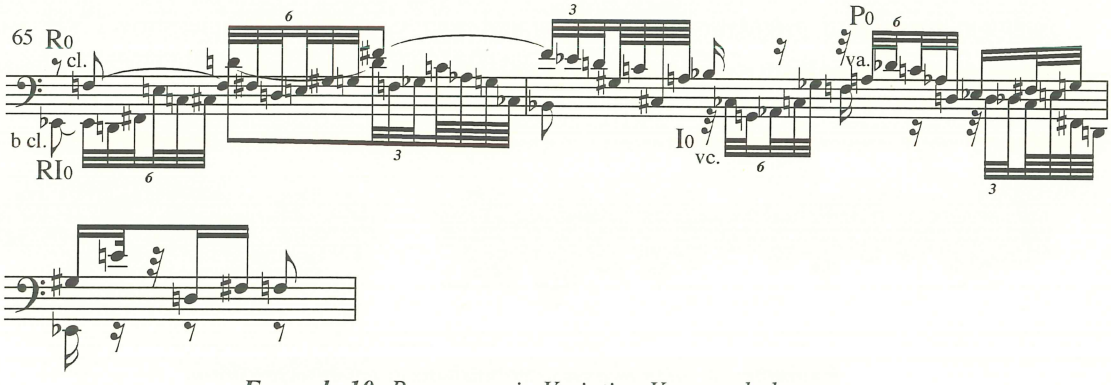
In Variation V, the row is played from both ends simultaneously by two instruments meeting each other at the middle. The new melody formed by row segmentation used in Variation IV also appears in this variation.



***Example 9**: Row usage in Variation V, first phrase.*

The second phrase begins with a complex superimposition and juxtaposition of many row permutations before settling down to imitative passages based on RI0, R0, I0 and finally P0, reversing the order of the first phrase and leading to the coda.

1st phrase **2nd phrase**
P I R RI RI R I P



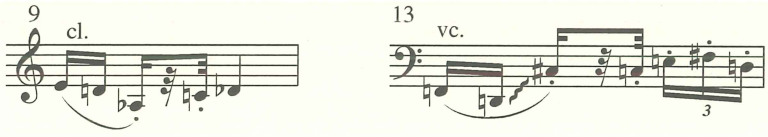
***Example 10**: Row usage in Variation V, second phrase.*

The coda is the most complicated section of this movement, functioning as a recapitulation of all ideas and motifs found in previous variations, for example, the 12678 fragment in the mandolin, measure 67 from Variation III, the use of notes 1-7 simultaneously with notes 8-14 from Variation V and the pedal tones from variation I. The rows are treated much freer. Occasionally there are logical plans for the order such as in the violin part, measure 76, which starts from both ends of the row and gradually moves toward the center, but often it is quite difficult to find the order of the row. Rows are cut into smaller groups and reordered or dis-

tributed to many instruments with different methods so that one senses the returns of short melodic fragments previously heard.

In Schoenberg's music, usually several occurrences of a few motifs create unity to the work. Due to the nature of the form of the third movement, however, it is difficult to recognize them. Sometimes the intervallic contents of motifs are preserved as the result of the consistent use of rows, but their rhythmic patterns are abandoned, or vice versa. Occasionally only the idea of grouping is maintained to help us recognize their origins. Overall, it cannot be said that there is a single motif working throughout the movement. Rather, some motifs work as links between consecutive sections to form smooth transitions.

Thus the first and second phrases of the theme are related because of their grouping and rhythmic identity. Variation I has a different character, but some rhythmic gestures from the theme reappear there, creating additional links between the two.

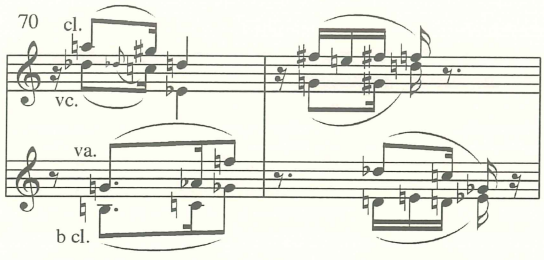


***Example 11**: A rhythmic gesture linking the Theme and Variation I.*

Schoenberg's use of articulations such as slur and *staccato* in the violin, measures 17-18 was aimed to emphasize the trichord partition of the row, similar to his use of rhythmic figures in measures 1-4 of the theme.

***Example 12**: Articulations emphasizing a trichord partition.*

A new motif of Variation III can be quickly traced back to what we heard before. The Bb-A dyad is the first notes of P_0 and is easily recognized, while the D-Eb-Gb fragment is emphasized earlier many times. (Compare the clarinet at the beginning of Example 7 and the last measure of Example 3.) In measure 58 of Variation V, the clarinet plays the highest notes (G-F#-C#-D, Example 9.) The ear can easily recognize the similar melodic contour and intervallic content with Variation III's motif, which is heard again in the coda (mandolin, measures 67-68.) We therefore probably hear measures 70-71 as a development of this motif.

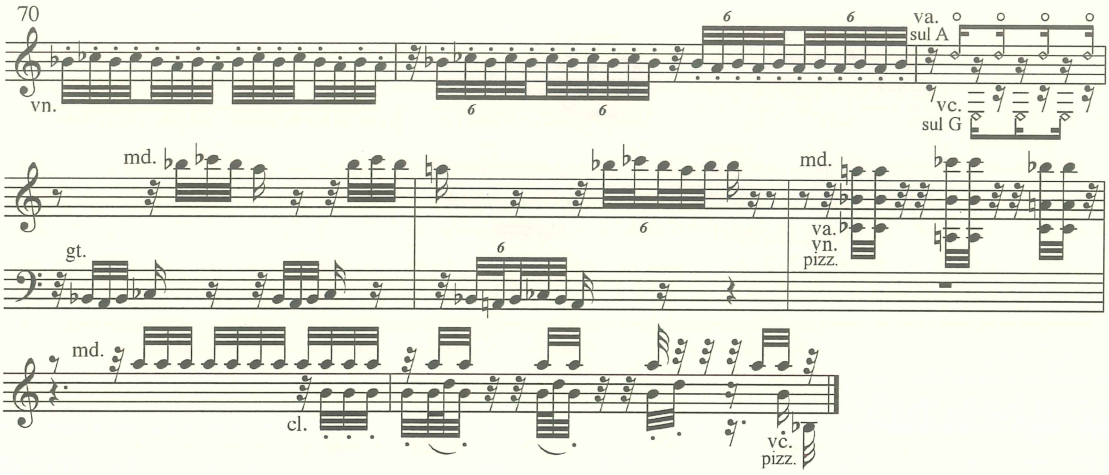


***Example 13**: Motivic development of notes 12678 in the coda.*

The unity of the movement is also derived from the tonal center and specific pitches surrounding it. Schoenberg set up an elaborate system to establish the Bb as the center early in the Theme. By using P_0 followed by R_0, the theme begins and ends on this note. Additionally the highest and lowest pitches of the theme (F# and D) are exactly eight semitones above and below this Bb, thus placing up the Bb as the center. (See Example 2.)

Variation I further demonstrates this plan. Once again, the variation begins and ends on the Bb. The first phrase also finds the F# and D as the highest and lowest tones, now an octave and eight semitones above and below the Bb. The pedal tones of the first and second phrases (the A in the guitar, measures 12-15 and the B in the mandolin, measures 17-21, respectively) form upper and lower neighboring tones around the center. Both A and B are presented at the end of each phrase, creating a cadential gesture. Loud *pizzicato* notes (F# and A in measures 19 and 21) highlight these structurally important pitches. (See Example 3.)

The Bb introduces the melody of Variation II. The F# and D are emphasized by being placed as the highest and lowest tones respectively in the mandolin, guitar and bass clarinet parts (Examples 4 and 6.) Variation III finds the guitar and mandolin playing the A and B as a transition between the two phrases. This is of course a reference to the idea of Bb as the tonal center of the movement (Example 7.) The role of F# and D is reversed in Variation IV where D is now the highest note and F# the lowest (Example 8.) Although the Bb is not presented clearly in Variation V, it is played as a pedal tone in the coda along with the A and B from measures 70-77. The movement ends with three pitch classes – B, A and Bb.

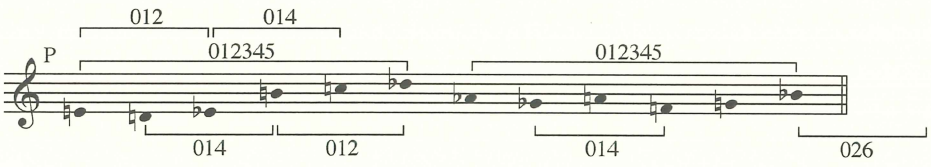


***Example 14**: The center tones in the coda.*

The Theme and Variations progresses from a single, linear line to more complicated textures. This is achieved by using more than one row at a time, using a row vertically and using various methods of row segmentation. The coda is the high point of this development. The unity of the movement comes from utilizing only transposition 0, from using specific motifs in adjacent areas both melodically and rhythmically and from systematic use of artificial tonal center.

Movement IV: Sonett

The serial procedure of the third movement is further refined in the fourth, whose row consists of twelve notes and thus is the first twelve-tone composition.

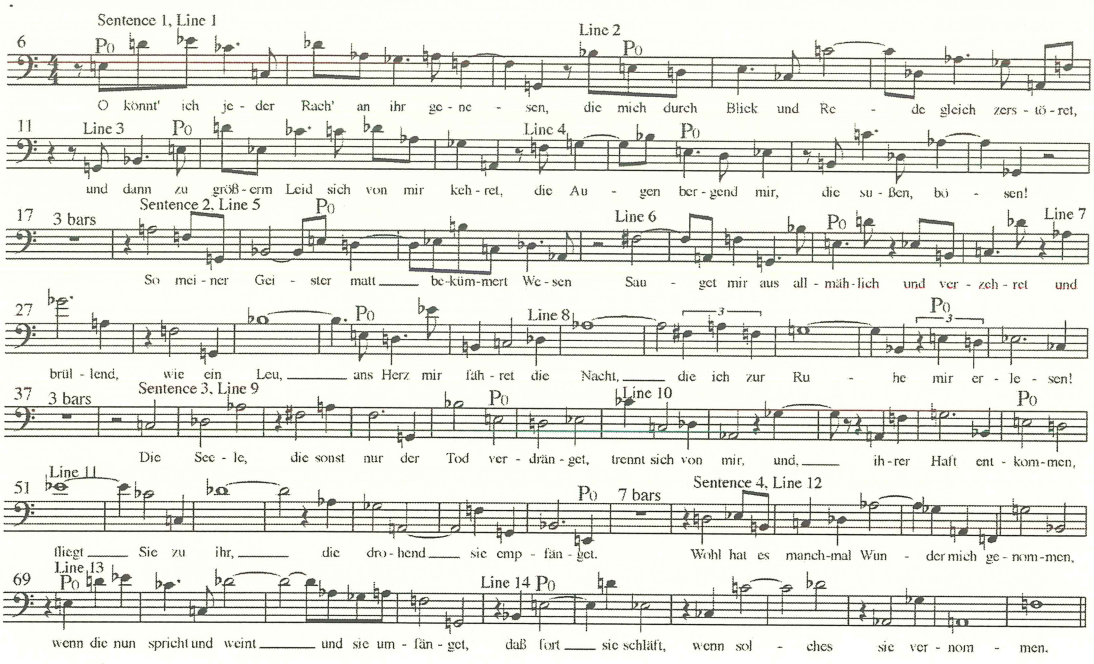


***Example 15:** The row of Movement IV and the 012/014/026 trichords.*

Like in the third movement, Schoenberg limited himself to the original form of the row with no transposition. Furthermore, the permutation of the row is now limited solely to P. Interval class 1 occurs many times in the row—noticeably the first and second trichord are the members of the 012 set class and both hexachords of the row belong to the 012345 class. There are also three occurrences of the 014 trichord. The row has no tritone between any consecutive pair of notes. To obtain this interval class, Schoenberg usually treated P_0 cyclically, i.e.

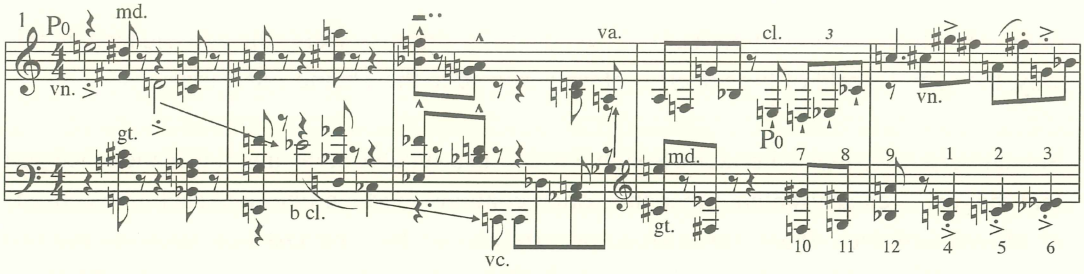
note 1 (E) always follows note 12 (Bb). Incidentally, this also yields the 026 trichord. In this way, the sound world of the Sonett is closely related to the Theme and Variations.

Schoenberg set to music Petrach's Sonett No. 217 in a syllabic style; and it is in the voice part that the row is clearly stated. Since the Sonett contains fourteen lines and each line consists of eleven syllables, there are thirteen occurrences of P0. The last two notes of the last statement (G and Bb) are held in long notes by the violin and viola in measures 78-80. Rests separate the first six lines of the Sonett from each other. This method, however, is later abandoned. Instead, rests appear elsewhere between the lines. This displacement of rests and the fact that the first note of each line is not always the same create a variety to the voice part despite the repetition of P0.



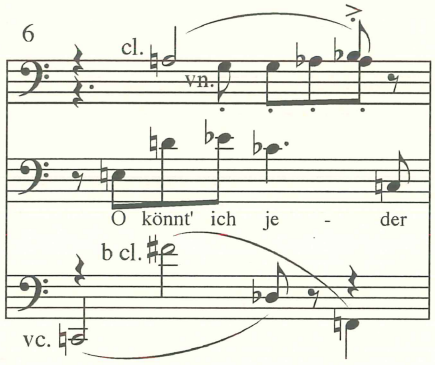
Example 16: *Sentences, lines and rows in the vocal part.*

The instrumental parts handle the row in interesting ways. Any notes left out by the main announcement in the melody are used as accompaniment so that all twelve pitches are always available over a given period. In the introduction, the melody is divided among the strings and clarinets. The mandolin and guitar supply the missing notes in a chordal texture. There is no row order in these two instruments: as long as all notes are presented, the row requirement is satisfied. This method is used until the middle of measure 4 when the row is cut into smaller groups, which are then reordered, such as happened in the mandolin and guitar parts in measures 4-5.



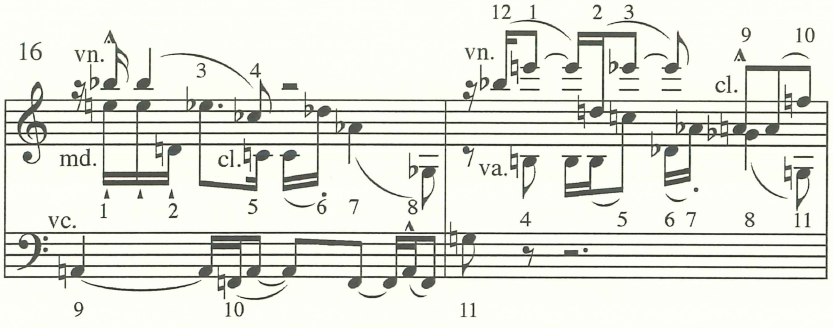
***Example 17**: The ordered row in the melody and the unordered row in the accompaniment.*

All instruments employ both methods when the voice is active, often with some intervallic suggestion of the tone row. The eight notes left out by the singer in measure 6 are divided in pairs among four instruments; all play interval class 1, a reference to the characteristic of the row itself.



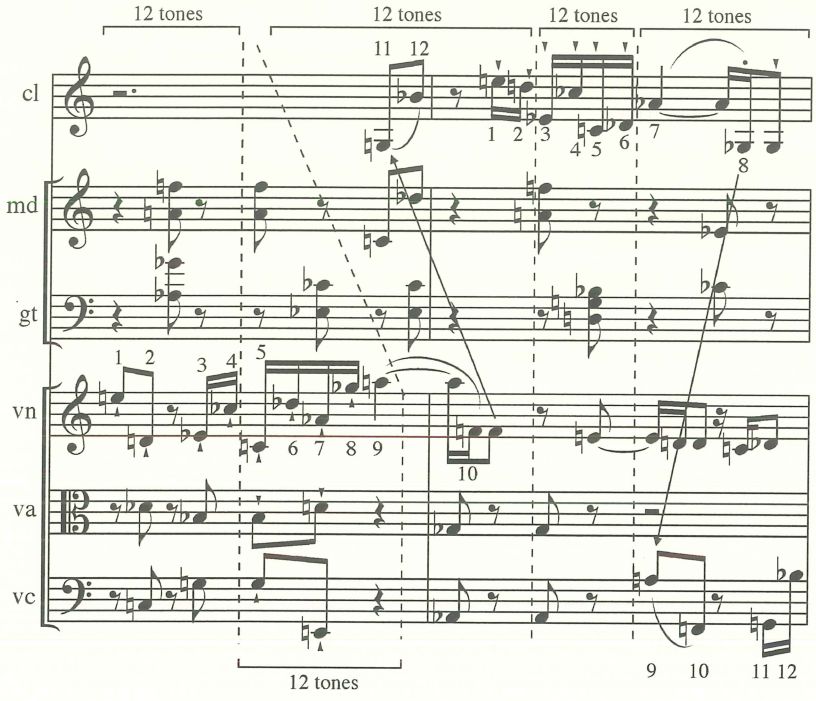
***Example 18**: A 12-tone collection formed by the melody and accompanying parts.*

Melodic fragments of the row are more apparent when the singer rests between sentences. For example, the ensemble plays a complete row between the first and second sentences.



***Example 19**: The row, used melodically in instrumental parts.*

A complete row, horizontally and vertically, is also found between the third and last sentences.



Example 20: P0, applied vertically and horizontally.

Therefore, there are always two appearances of P0 at a given moment. This method often produces new motifs or interval classes not available in the original row, and enables Schoenberg to achieve variety in sound. Because of this, there is no single motif working throughout the movement. Instead, short rhythmic patterns specific to certain instruments are common— a situation similar to the third movement.

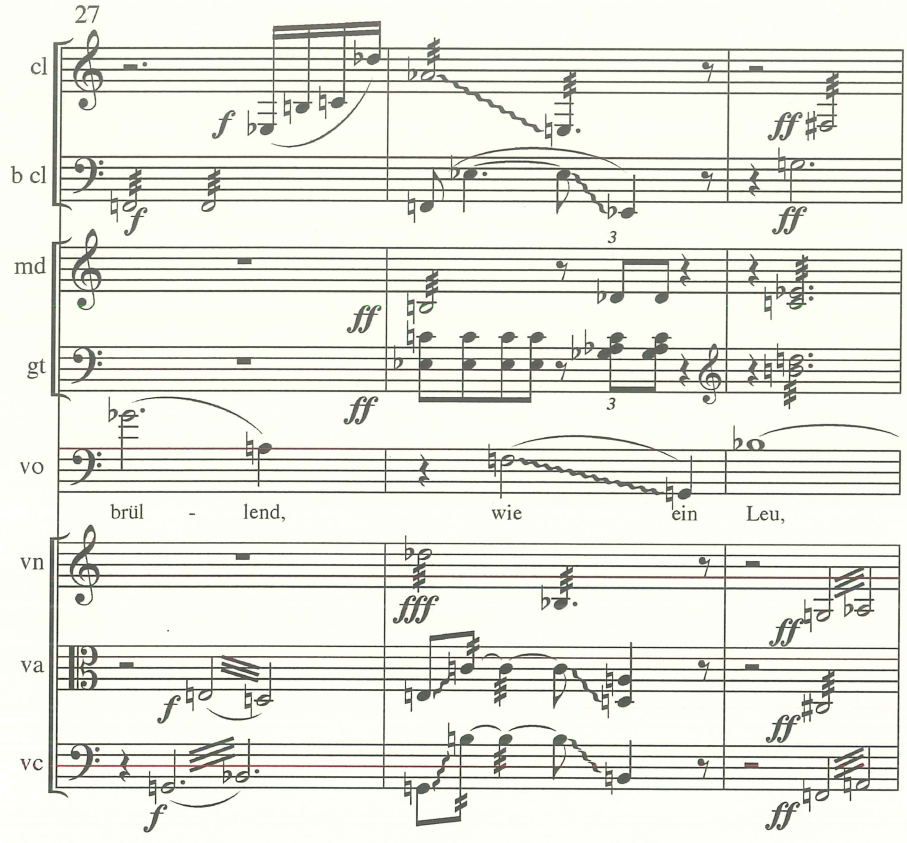
The rhythmic idea of the voice part is transformed throughout the piece. The first sentence contains distinct patterns: one or three eighth notes followed by a longer note or two. The sentence is built on the repetition and alternation of these patterns. Likewise, the second sentence is based on the alternation of 1-3 eighth notes and longer notes. The long notes appear noticeably more often than in the first sentence.

The smallest rhythmic value in the third sentence is a quarter note and the longest is a dotted whole note, yielding a sense of movement that is less intense. Although the last sentence contains eighth notes and generally has similar rhythmic gestures to the second sentence, the slower tempo creates a different feel. Thus, the pace of the singer is fast and energetic in the first two sentences and from that point on is gradually slower and softer until the end of the last sentence. (See Example 16.)

The decision on these changes of pace is clearly based on the text:

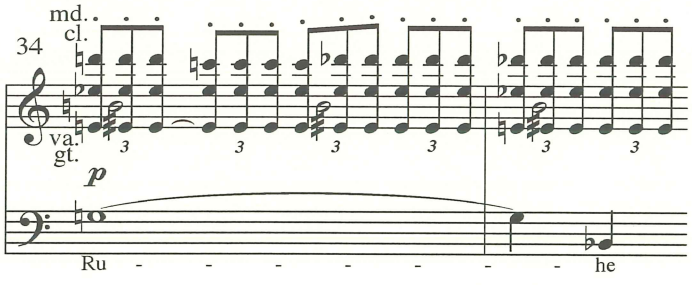
If I could but take revenge on her
whose looks and words alike disturb me,
and who then, to increase my suffering, turns away,
hiding her eyes from me, her sweet and wicked eyes!
So she slowly draws from me
my broken spirit, consumes it
and roaring like a lion,
drive away the night that should have brought me peace!
My soul, once by death alone oppressed,
separates from me, and freed of its bond,
flees to her who receives it with threats.
Often I am amazed
when my soul speaks and weeps and embraces her
that she, perceiving it, sleeps still.

The aggressive, fast pace at the beginning reflects the idea of "revenge", while the last sentence, which is almost an afterthought, is portrayed with a slower pace and softer dynamics. Various musical devices to accommodate word painting on a smaller scale are found in many places. The lowest tone and the largest, downward leap in the first sentence (Ab-Gb, measure 16) corresponds to the word *bösen* ("wicked," see Example 16.) The flutter tonguing and tremolo effects in the clarinets and strings portray the phrase *"Und brüllend, wie ein Leu,"* ("and roaring like a lion,") while the voice sings the highest note on the word *brüllend.*



***Example 21**: Word painting utilizing dynamics, flutter tonguing, tremolo and registers.*

The word *Nacht* ("night") is related to *Ruhe* ("peace"), and were both set to softer dynamics with repeated notes.



***Example 22**: Word painting utilizing dynamics, tremolo and repetition.*

The third sentence shows Schoenberg's mastery in word painting. The phrase *"Die Seele, die sonst nur der Tod verdränget, trennt sich von mir, und ihrer Haft entkommen,"* is portrayed with ascending chromatic voice-leading from Ab to Cb and a leap to high Eb, the highest note of the sentence with the softest dynamic, on the word *fliegt* ("flees," see Example 16, measures 40-51.)

The accumulation of twelve pitches usually takes about two to four beats, which is quite fast. The vertical organization therefore is not so much a movement from one chord to the next as a fast succession of twelve-tone aggregations. Since both hexachords of the row are already chromatic in natures, these aggregations can be constructed quite easily. The process culminates in measures 58-62 – between the third and last sentences – where the ensemble plays a denser texture and the pitch accumulation is complete on almost every beat. The result of this is, despite complex surface activities, a more static harmony.

The decision to limit the composition to P_0 is probably to achieve unity in the movement that is rather free in term of form and motifs. Despite this limitation, the freer treatment of the row's order enables Schoenberg to create many new short fragments of melodies. Nevertheless, as early as in Opus 25, the composer already began using other permutations and transpositions as well.

Many serial techniques commonly found in Schoenberg's later works was foreshadowed in Movements III and IV. In his first, completely serial and twelve-tone composition, the composer already experimented with different ways to treat the row within a strict framework of serial technique. The systematic partitioning, the rotation of the row, and the application of the row vertically and horizontally all find their use in virtually all of his later twelve-tone works. The comparison of, for example, the third movement with the *String Trio, Op.45* and the fourth movement with the *String Quartet No. 4, Op.37* will clearly show the foundation of these later works.

What missing from the third and fourth movements are advanced serial techniques and properties such as combinatoriality. We will discuss them next time in the last part of the analysis of the *Serenade.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Forte, A. (1998). *The Atonal Music of Anton Webern.* New Haven: Yale University.

Forte, A. (1973). *The Structure of atonal music.* New Haven: Yale University.

Rahn, J. (1980). *Basic Atonal Theory.* New York: Schirmer.

Salzman, E. (1974). *Twentieth-Century Music: An Introduction (2nd ed.).* New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Schoenberg, A. (1987). *Arnold Schoenberg: Letters.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Schoenberg, A. (1984). *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Simm, B. (2000). *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg, 1908-1923.* New York: Oxford University.

Straus, J. (1990). *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory.* New Jersey: Prentice Hall.