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ON STRUCTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL DIMENSIONS OF ANTON WEBERN'S MUSIC

Anton Webern Müziğinin Yapısal ve Düşünsel Boyutları Üzerine

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Abstract

Anton Webern is among the most important composer and music theorists of 20th-century music called as avant-garde. In the first stage of this study the 'serial music understanding' to which Anton Webern has contributed significantly in terms of theory and composition is presented in the context of the general situation of 20th century music. In the later stages, the component-complement connection of the composer's works and the simplicity principle, which is considered to be one of the most important building blocks of the music style, are discussed. In this process while making theoretical determinations through selected works of the composer, sensory and intellectual impressions in his works have been disclosed. In this way, it is expected that the composer will be understood better and the analysis will contribute to the theory, practice and listening processes.

Keywords: Anton Webern, Twelve Tone Music, Serial Music, New Music, Simplicity in Music.

Özet

Anton Webern 20. yüzyıl müziğinin avangart (öncü) olarak tabir edilen önemli besteci ve müzik kuramcılarında biridir. Bu çalışmada ilk aşamada, 20. yüzyıl müziğinin genel durumu çerçevesinde, Anton Webern'in, kuram ve eser bakımından önemli katkılar sağladığı Seriyel "Dizisel" Müzik anlayışı sunulmaktadır. Sonraki aşamalarda, bestecinin yapıtlarındaki parça-bütün ilişkisi ve müzik stiline en önemli yapı taşlarından biri olarak görülen sadelik ilkesi ele alınmaktadır. Bu süreçte, bestecinin seçilmiş eserleri üzerinden yapılan teorik saptamalarla birlikte, eserlerindeki duyumsal ve düşünsel izlenimler ortaya konmuştur. Böylelikle, bestecinin daha iyi anlaşılması ve incelemenin teori, icra, dinleme bakımından katkı sağlaması ön görülmüştür.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Anton Webern, On İki Ton Müziği, Dizisel Müzik, Yeni Müzik, Müzikte Sadelik.

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INTRODUCTION

The form (style) anxiety in art appears as an element coercing the artist at every instance. This coercion force bears from the artistic desire to reach the top point and perfection in terms of form. For this reason, it is natural for the artist to take on new searches continuously.

Musical forms and genres such as concerto and sonata, whose first forms we have seen in the baroque period, have reached their final form with composers such as Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven in the classical period, and have been carried to the highest points in terms of form and performance with the composers of the romantic era such as Liszt and Brahms. Additionally, composers such as Wagner, Berlioz, Mahler and Debussy produced new ideas in terms of chromatic sound structures, chord sequences and cadence, and meanwhile they produced works pushing the boundaries of the conventional tonal structure. In the following stages, the question of whether these forms or sound elements can be moved to further levels in terms of structure and interpretation has become a subject of open debate.

Parallel to this discussion, the point reached by music at the twentieth century started to be questioned both in terms of form as well as in terms of the major-minor (tonal) system, which had been the basic structure of sound organizations until that time. In addition to all of these developments, a discussion platform on the subjects such as melody, rhythm, timbre, intonation and even acoustics, in other words; the basic elements of music has formed.

As a result, the twentieth century has been a period in which music has experienced refractions, as in all arts developing on the same ideational and intellectual ground, in parallel with the political, economic as well as cultural changes and the World Wars. With the stepping into the twelve-tone system from the tonal structure in music, the orientation shifted towards free form conception, and the basic elements such as melody, rhythm and timbre evolved to a great extent. In this direction;

- a) the polytonal line in Charles Ives's *Central Park in the Dark* (1906),
- b) the chromatic modal music conception in Claude Debussy's *The Little Shepherd from Children's Corner* (1908),
- c) the dodecaphonic structure in Arnold Schoenberg's *Op.16 Five Pieces for Orchestra* (1909),

- d) the dissonance chords and polyrhythmic elements in Igor Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* (1913),

are among important examples showing how the music understanding has evolved through a change process in coping up with the soul of the era, at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Example 1.



The example presents the polyrhythmic elements which Igor Stravinsky used in the *Sacrificial Dance* part of his work *Le Sacre du Printemps* (The Rite of Spring).

Austrian theoretician and composer Anton Webern (1883-1945), one of the most important personalities of this rupture environment, having emerged from the process of change in music, is a significant shareholder in laying the foundations of the point reached today in serial conception that has developed following the twelve tone applications in music.

ANALYSIS

Serial Music

The twelve tone applications in music are the product of an attempt to tear the music away from the conventional major-minor system tonal structure in order to reach a new system. Since the 16th century, through the works of Liszt, Wagner and Debussy in the romantic period, the gradually evolving tonal system has begun to be questioned theoretically on hierarchical and intellectual basis and thus the foundations of the twelve-tone system have been laid.

The pioneers of this initiative are Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg and Anton Webern. But Pierre Boulez, one of the important music theoreticians and composers of the 20th century, argued that Webern had laid the foundations of the twelve-tone system in real terms:

“As a whole, Schoenberg was not much interested in the problem of creating forms based on twelve voices. Webern, on the other

hand, has been successful in writing compositions whose form arose from the naturally given material.” (Copland, 2015: 92)

Although Boulez appears to be right we cannot deny the contributions of these composers to the twelve-tone system when we look at *op.16 Five Pieces for Orchestra* and Berg’s *op.6 Three Pieces for Orchestra*. Consequently, the works of these composers with their music theories and ideas are considered as the benchmark of the transition to a new era in classical music going parallel with the general situation of the 20th century in political, economic and cultural terms.

The twelve tone system whose structural foundations are based on the numerical presentation during the production stage has roots in ancient music. According to Schoenberg and his followers, atonal music is the logical next stage in the evolution of classical music beginning with church music in the West. They started with the understanding that “conflict, discordance are concepts prone to subjectivity and discussion.” According to Schoenberg atonal music does not bring about conflict and discordance problem unlike the general belief, rather it frees the music in a sense (Schoenberg, <https://monoskop.org>, 2017).

Of course, there were those who did not think like Schoenberg and his followers. According to French composer Arthur Honegger, one of the leading figures of the twentieth century; Schoenberg was an outstanding composer, but was limited in his own abilities, and he was using atonalism not because of artistic need, but because of his fear of tonality or in other words, his inability to do so. Tonality drowned him; whereas he could not escape the magical influence of Wagner. He created atonalism as a kind of doctrine to break this circle. Ostensibly, he evoked his own sense of freedom; but in fact he had imprisoned himself. From this argument we understand that the twentieth century was a dialectical age where the innovative attempts we have faced as questioning identities are also questioned themselves.

When we look at the twelve tone system formally, according to the organizational chart in the hierarchical order in which twelve voices are used together, we see that voices are evaluated in an autonomous structure, each with separate functionality, independent of their tonal functions.

Example 2.

La	sib	reb	do	si	re	mib	solb	fa	mi	sol	lab
Sol#	la	do	si	sib	reb	re	fa	mi	mib	solb	sol
Fa	solb	la	lab	sol	sib	si	re	reb	do	mib	mi
fa#	sol	sib	la	lab	si	do	mib	re	reb	mi	fa
Sol	lab	si	sib	la	do	reb	mi	mib	re	fa	solb
Mi	fa	lab	sol	solb	la	sib	reb	do	si	re	mib
Mib	mi	sol	fa#	fa	lab	la	do	si	sib	reb	re
Do	reb	mi	mib	re	fa	solb	la	lab	sol	sib	sib
Reb	re	fa	mi	mib	fa#	sol	sib	la	lab	si	do
Re	mib	solb	fa	mi	sol	lab	si	sib	la	do	reb
Si	do	mib	re	reb	mi	fa	lab	sol	solb	la	sib
la#	si	re	reb	do	mib	mi	sol	fa#	fa	sol#	la

The basic serial Webern has used in *op. 30 Orchestral Variations* is formed with La- si-flat- re-flat- do- si- re- mi-flat- sol-flat- fa- mi- sol- la-flat voices. In the work, we observe a structure related to the symmetrical form of twelve audio sequences with three or four audio modules used in reverse translation.

Example 3.

Original Dizi (Original-O)

Yatay Çevrim (Retrograde-R)

Dikey Çevrim (Inversion-I)

Yatay Dikey Çevrim (Retrograde Inversion-RI)

The template appearing in Example3 is constituting the forming structure together with the original series and cycles determined in Schoenberg's *op. 37 String Quartet No.4*.

As seen, in the twelve-tone system, a series is obtained by using each of the twelve sounds in the schema only once, respectively. In the next step, the resulting sequence is derived from various combinations, such as reading from end to end, maintaining the ranges of sounds and inverting their directions. In other words, it is a system which is used as

a structure which is used with the basic sequence determined by the composer and the four basic sequences of horizontal, vertical and horizontal inversions of the vertical. In other words, it is a system used with the basic sequence determined by the composer, with the basic four sequences formed by the horizontal, vertical and horizontal of the vertical cycle and with the transposition situations of this series.

Anton Webern, in addition to the voices and conversions that have been determined as a series, has also added the timbre, weighing and nuance elements of these sounds to the system and followed the holistic organization (total organization) path. Consequently, the *Total Serialism* technique which is based on the twelve tone system has aroused. In this way Webern has brought a different dimension to an already new understanding that we can call “innovation in innovation.”

Component-Complement Connection in His Music and Structural Features

With the emergence of an experiential source of inspiration as a prerequisite, the series of mass clusters constituting the structural pillar in his works are the products of a process that has been designed with a high concentration process and meticulously long time. The serial sound materials used to reach the integrity of their works have become not only a tool but also the purpose itself. Webern stated this as follows:

“They ask me this: “How did you find out this series?” It wasn't random; it was according to secret laws. This kind of commitment is very strict, man has to think very carefully and seriously, just like getting married, it is very difficult to choose! How did this series come about? I can imagine that I've come to it in a completely structured way, perhaps in order to achieve the maximum range possible. But speaking according to my experiences, I found it with the aid of inspiration which is generally found in creative people. What we have created is a law. Previously, when we wrote in Do-major, we also felt connected to it; otherwise it was a messy result. We had to go back to tonic; we were connected to the nature of this series. Now we are building our inventions on a series with twelve notes, not seven notes, but also with a certain sequence. This is the composition with twelve notes that are only related to each other” (Webern: 1998, 56-57).

In accordance with Webern's sonorant searches, it is observed in his music that the sound materials in the auditory trajectory are obtained with nuance and orchestration elements, and intermittent

In the component-complement connection of his works, the composer's competence in providing structural integrity, the importance given to the technical details, the subtle texture structure and the hidden laws emerge as the elements of mathematical balance.

Example 5.

II Var.
sehr lebhaft (♩ = ca 84)

Cl.
Cl. b.
Cor. I
Arpa

20 21 22 23 24 25 26

senza sord.
f

pizz. arco pizz. arco
f

The II. Part of Op. 21 Symphony under the subheading Variations is written for clarinet, bass clarinet, 2 horns, harp and string instruments in two parts and lasts 10 minutes, which appears as a nine parted whole in the framework of symmetric fiction together with a theme, seven variations and a coda used in the end. In order to reach the whole through values which can be considered identical, short series reminding of each other in a symmetrical structure have been formed in each work. Composer Özkan Manav explains this work as follows:

“These pieces, each one of which is approximately one sentence long, rest on different textures that can be clearly separated from each other even at the first listening. The shortness, and the conciseness of the fragments, it is understood that they are closely related to the reciprocating symmetrical structure of the array. First of all, the composer has designed a series with a similar end to the beginning, which has a symmetry axis in itself that can be consumed in a breath, in order to guarantee the perception of the symmetry. Here the limited number of sounds within the array and the melodious relations these sounds have grown have formed a strict reference for the composer,

and the theme as well as the variations have organized as sentences which can be consumed in a glimpse except two exceptions (the two breakages at the middle of the variations III & IV)” (Manav, Nemutlu, 2011: 188).

In a methodological sense, one of the most prominent features of Webern's music is the transfer of any module in the array to different registers. In connection with this, the twelve-tone sequence and the fact that each voice of its transmissions is heard with different instruments in different registers are characteristic of Webern's orchestration approach. Thus, the composer has paved the way for the more freely use of the twelve-tone system.

Example 6.

The modular fragmentation of twelve-tone sequences in Op. 30 Orchestral Variations can be cited as examples of this understanding structure.

Besides the twelve tone system Webern has developed theoretically together with his mentor Schoenberg and Berg, he has experimented in the direction of different sonorant searches. He has put together a unique instrumentation pattern with the use and combination of the major orchestral instruments that have not been tested until then.

Example 7.

IV. 1

Langsam (1) marcia funebre.
mit Dampfung

Gr. Tr. *ppp* Raum hörbar

Tamtam *ppp* Raum hörbar

Tiefes Glockenspiel. *ppp* Raum hörbar
(in der Ferne aufgespielt)

In the work *Op. 6 Six Pieces for Orchestra* presented in the example we are facing a pattern including numerous percussion instruments; 6 French horns, 6 trumpets, 2 harps, and a celesta, a glockenspiel, and tom-tom. In the work *Op. 10 Five Pieces for Orchestra*, hosting instruments like flute, oboe, mib-clarinet, bass clarinet, horn, trumpet, trombone, harmonium, celesta, harp and percussion instruments, as well as guitar and mandolin, present a vivid example for the phases within the trilogy of experimental and innovation.

At the same time, the composer has pushed the boundaries of instrument techniques in the context of achieving various sonorant effects.

Example 8.

tempo
molto rit. - - - sehr gemächlich rit. - -

Fl. *3*

Ob. *ff*

Kl. *ff*

Trp. *ff* *pizz.* *p*

Gge/Br. *sff* *pizz.* *arco*

As shown in the work *Op. 24 Concerto for Nine Instruments* example, the techniques such as the frullato (flutter tonging) technique used in the flute, and the pizzicato (plucking the strings) technique used in string instruments are placed in his works we also encounter a number of effects that symbolize the tension, uneasiness and uncertainty of the time, such as screaming, whistling, and rustling.

The contrasts used in terms of loudness are very important in Webern music. For example, the sudden rise in pppp to fff, or vice versa, is an important element of the dynamic process. This musical idea, which is very unique and characteristic in terms of structure, brings the listener face-to-face in the wake of an awakening with the realities of the tragic era in the intellectual sense.

Example 9.

The musical score for Example 9 is a page from a manuscript for Op. 5 Five Movements for String Quartet. It consists of four staves for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass. The music is in 3/4 time. The score shows a progression of dynamics from pppp to fff. Above the staves, there are markings for 'molto accel.' and 'tempo I (♩=100)'. Specific instrument techniques are indicated: 'arco' for the strings and 'col legno' for the woodwinds. The score ends with the marking 'am Stagg'.

Op.5 Five Movements for String Quartet is one of the works that show diversity and richness in nuance with the intense contrasts used. In addition, with the presence of different instrument techniques intensely, the work requires a good competence and harmonious co-operation for each instrument due to the continuous change in the shrillness and base in the instruments in free tone understanding.

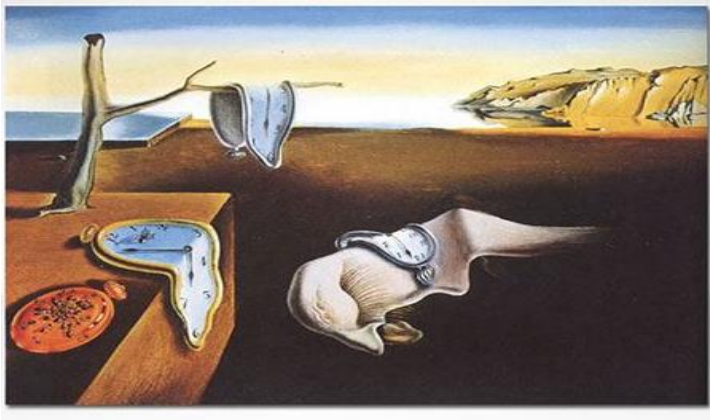
Simplicity and Essence in his Music

In Webern's work, we come across the simplest form of organization in sound materials where various instruments are used together. Hypothetically we can get such an impression: In the first stage, the composer has dealt with many instrumental sound materials in a pluralistic environment and space, and by eliminating many elements in the last instance, he has reached a reductionism and simplicity which corresponds to the sensory effect of his music understanding. With such a sense of simplicity, the composer was able to create both sensory and intellectual effects simultaneously. In this respect, the Estonian composer Arvo Part's views on Webern are very remarkable:

“Serial music writers think that they obtain better works by writing more complex. Why does Webern's music not lose anything from its respectability in this area? It is disciplined, meticulous, and simple, that's why. I'm sorry to state that the composers think about this, but they don't apply, because they think they have a lot to say. They are also not aware of the fact that actually they say almost nothing. The immorality and divergence from the truth are born under these complexes. Truth is considerably plain and simple; the moral person knows this is so. Non-virtuous people make mistakes, cannot perceive and reflect this lack of perception to their music” (Ünalpi 2003: 54).

The principle of essence, brevity and simplicity is one of the most important elements of Webern music. His works evoke a feeling of unfinishedness in the listener. Here, we must focus on the phenomenon of time. It is important to comprehend the spirit of the time as well as the musical time in the structural sense. Industrial revolutions, new inventions, steam powered machines, airplanes, World War I and the economic crisis... Time is no longer the same. Time has always remained the same, but perceptual orbit of time has changed. The phenomenon of temporal illusion, which is rapidly flowing in the perception dimension that is tackled by the struggle for survival and everyday life, has become equivalent to the object of production and consumption of the era. Under all these circumstances, the loss of time, which took place in perceptions and memories, has inevitably led to deconstruction and breakage in art forms.

Example 10.



It is no coincidence that the works that Webern has composed in line with his view of the world and the art corresponds to the same

period with the painting '*Melting Hours*', which Salvador Dali painted in 1931.

We can conclude that Webern's short works are not an example of inadequacy, but a necessity of art and music that has passed through many stages until then and have become formal in parallel to the spirit of time.

Evaluating on a higher philosophical level; some artists realized that elaborating the complex concepts such as universe, cosmos, finiteness, infiniteness, life, death, and time entering into winding roads, as well as using numerous materials, and at great lengths would not serve their artistic views, and they turned to the simple, essential, and plain path. Cosmos, the limit of perception of infinity and the limits of the language used in the awareness of the work of art, a multi-media environment, the self, simple and short, tried to reach. This is the perception of the perceptual limitation of humanity as the fate of the earth. What is important is the channeling of this state of consciousness in the right direction. It is also wrong to make sense as long as it is bad. What is meant to be expressed is the desire of the composer to reach the artistic quality, preferably to be short and self-explanatory.

Understanding the cosmos, with the awareness about the limits of perception of the infinity and the limits of the language used, they have tried to reach the spirituality of their artworks through the essential, plain and short instead of a multiple environment. This is becoming aware of the perceptual limitations of humanity as the fate of the earth. What is important is the direction of this awareness to a righteous channel. Actually, it would be false to conclude from here that the long one is the bad one. What is meant to be expressed here is the desire of the composer to reach the artistic quality, preferably through being short and essential, where the work becomes self-explanatory.

Actually, the artworks containing plainness and shortness are anesthetized as the perceptual reflections of the contingency of the transcendental but also fragile desire to reach the knowledge of the spiritual world with the limited ontological existence under the influence of the great cosmos. In the light of this consciousness, we better understand the importance of Arvo Part's commitment to simplicity and virtue attributed to Webern.

It is interesting to realize that when we compare the total length of all of the works of Webern they do not reach to the length of a Mozart

Opera. In terms of quality, these works of art have not lost their value until today.

Webern's works appear as an indication of the importance of silence which gained a dynamic feature, as well as the proof of its importance in the intellectual and structural music art. The moments of silence, which have been dispersed in his works competently, became a precursor and informant of the sound structures that came after him. It is worth recalling the importance of using nuance elements in a qualified way. It is possible to perceive the words of the German philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein "The one who does not know silence cannot recognize music!" (<http://filozof.net>) as a reference to Webern's works.

These moments of silence are moments that face the subject (listener) with a deep questioning situation in terms of intellect. In the dialectics of sound and silence through music, the object, presented as an imaginary contrast, as well as the structural idea, has so penetrated into the transcendental one (the spiritual world) that the object has become an undeniable part of the subject, in a sense it is identified with the subject. The moments have turned out to be moments when the subject, who has faced all the normality of the external world, for a moment, escaped from the notion of time leading to a straight operation and real and spiritual interrogations from the outside world to the inner world.

This sentence in Tarkan Koç's essay on silence provides a good example of how Webern music can be described in this regard:

"The silence that exists in the music is the moment of judgement for music and us. Because silence leads us to our moment of existence, to the moment we can return to ourselves. Silence moments determine the course of our ontological process. He leaves us with us; this is the consciousness of being alone due to being single consequently alone. This is a gain. It is the dull silhouette of the moment where the ontology multiplies and starts to breath with us" (Koç, 2008: 68).

Webern's music, in a characteristic way, gives the connotation of images hanging in the air on the verge of uncertainty between silence and sound. This effect manifests itself as a sense that appears immediately after the finishing of the music, as if the music remained unfinished. With this effect, the intellectual states of the instinctive moments in the music process continue even after the end of the music.

CONCLUSION

Each artist is an iconic personality of his/her era; in a sense s/he is the servant of his/her era. As a pioneer composer, Anton Webern put forth works that are appropriate to the spirit of his era, and shed light on the next generation of composers and music people with his theories, ideas and compositions. Anton Webern is one of the leading composers of a school called serial music, which was introduced into the holistic organizational structure by adding the timbre of sounds, weighing and nuance elements to the technique of twelve tone. As it can be understood from the analysis, it is understood that the composer builds his works on some kind of mathematical possibilities in symmetrical or identical structures in order to provide a holistic scheme while preserving the tight organization in the series. As mentioned in the selected examples, it is seen that the tightly organized structures together with symmetrical fictions designed as sections and wholes, inevitably lead to an understanding of counterpoint shaped by canonical relations. In this respect, it is concluded that; Although the elements of composer's general music style as decisive values, shortness, low volume, economy and silence (abundant use of silences) in his works can be said to be the product of meticulous work, although they leave simple impressions on the buyer. Here the composer;

a) Ability to use instrumentation which has a decisive effect on sound pitches,

b) In internal dynamics, it forms chain timbre particles that focus on a single major and do not impair integrity,

c) The strict discipline and use of structural elements such as contrasts in nuances and rhythmic-motif movements have been decisive factors.

At the same time, these deep structures, which give the impression of simple, required the composer's musical style to be evaluated not only in formal terms but also in intellectual terms. Thus, an environment conducive to a time-moment questioning intellectual dialectic form formed by a theoretical and structural chain was formed. For this reason, Webern allowed the opening of new doors and was undoubtedly regarded as one of the most important theorists and composers of his time. All of these qualities have taken the composer one step further than his comrades Schoenberg and Berg. The composer influenced composers such as Boulez, Messiaen Stockhausen and Xenakis. As a result, Anton Webern, as a pioneering composer who

foresaw the future, produced works in accordance with the spirit of his age and shed light on the next generation of composers and music people with his theories, ideas and compositions.

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