

# Peripetie

Schoenberg

# Schoenberg

- Born in Vienna, Austria, in 1874, died in 1951
- Started learning the violin at 8 years old
- Started composing at a young age, but did not have formal teaching until his late teens
- His first professional compositions were in the style of the Romantic era
- Taught in Berlin and Vienna (founding the Second Viennese School- a group of composers including Berg and Webern)
- He moved from Germany to Paris, then to California in 1933, as the Nazis thought his music was 'decadent'
- Switched to atonal music in 1908
- Audiences didn't understand his music
- Developed the style of Serialism a few years after writing 'Five Orchestral Pieces'



# How Expressionism Developed

- Composers during the late Romantic era were creating longer, grander pieces of music. Wagner started using chromaticism, with fewer perfect cadences.
- In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, composers had to either use classical forms and key relationships in a new way (impressionism, for example, involved normal chords and harmonies, but combined in unusual ways), or abandon them altogether. Schoenberg chose the latter, as he thought the individual sounds of the instruments were just as important as the melody (leading to him inventing the term '*klangfarbenmelodie*'). This caused him to start writing atonal music.
- Expressionism was strongest in Germany just after WW1, due to people wanting to express their opinions on the new restrictions on them imposed by the Treaty of Versailles.

# Key Features of Expressionism

- Atonal, giving each of the 12 semitones equal importance
- Usually expresses just one very strong emotion
- The full range of instruments are used (i.e. the extremes of each register are used)
- Timbre is of equal importance to melody
- Extreme dynamic changes
- Often compositions are short, as they have no key structure

# Expressionism

| Expressionist Composers |
|-------------------------|
| Anton Webern            |
| Alban Berg              |
| Ernst Krenek            |
| Igor Stravinsky         |

# Five Orchestral Pieces

- A set of five atonal pieces written for a full orchestra
- Each piece lasts between 1 and 5 minutes
- There is no connecting theme between any of the pieces
- Originally written for Richard Strauss (to get attention from important musical figures), but he didn't like it
- Originally, the pieces did not have individual names until 13 years after they were composed



# Peripetie

- '*Peripetie*' means 'a sudden change of fortune'
- It is the 4<sup>th</sup> movement in 'Five Orchestral Pieces'
- Composed in 1909
- First performed in 1912

# Key Musical Elements

- The main idea of the piece is a hexachord
- *Klangfarbenmelodie* is used, where the melody moves through different instruments
- Octave displacement is a key feature (where notes suddenly shift up one octave)
- 3 canons are used in the piece
- Dissonance
- Many performance directions, more than was the norm for music during that period
- Frequent use of ways to alter the sound of an instrument (e.g. using mutes on trumpets)



# Instrumentation

- A full orchestra (NB: There are very few places where the whole orchestra plays together)
- The instruments are often played at the extremes of their registers
- 90 people are required for a performance
- Mutes are used on the trumpets

# Structure and Melody

- Disjunct, angular melodies
- Octave displacement used
- Composed of 7 different motifs
  - A- Opens the piece, a fanfare-like hexachord (with the notes sounded individually)
  - B- A hexachord played as a chord, falling after motif A
  - C- An angular idea in triplets (NB: Although this is reused, it has changed considerably)
  - D- Repeated hexachords, using quavers, semi-quavers and demi-semi-quavers
  - E- A soft idea with a simple rhythm, ending on a hexachord
  - F- A short chromatic idea, often played with another idea at the same time
  - G- A much longer melody, with larger intervals between notes
- Loosely in Rondo form (A B A<sub>1</sub> C A<sub>1</sub>), but not a traditional Rondo due to the lack of tonality and rhythm changes

# Texture

- The texture constantly changes, but it is mainly contrapuntal, with some homophonic and monophonic sections
- Imitation and inversion are used to build up texture
- A huge range of dynamics is used



# Harmony and Tonality

- Atonal
- Lots of dissonance
- Motifs based on hexachords

# Rhythm, Metre and Tempo

- The time signature changes between 2/4, 3/4 and 4/4
- The piece is labelled '*Sehr rasch*' i.e. very fast
- The rhythms are complex (e.g. dotted notes, demi-semi quavers etc.)
- Very quick changes in rhythm
- Very little repetition of rhythms