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SOME NOTES ON THE UNKNOWN
ALTENBERG LIEDER

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WHAT WE KNOW of the history of Alban Berg's *Fünf Orchesterlieder nach Ansichtskartentexten von Peter Altenberg*, Opus 4, more usually known as the *Altenberg Lieder*, can be summed up in a page. Berg was working on the cycle in the summer of 1912, as we learn from two excerpts of letters to Webern quoted by Redlich¹ and Reich.² This was at a time when Berg (no longer a formal student of Schoenberg, who had moved to Berlin) at last, after almost two years, found himself freed from his arduous but dedicated labors of preparing piano reductions of Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*, the vocal movements of the Opus 10 Quartet, and Franz Schreker's opera *Der ferne Klang*, and also an index for Schoenberg's *Harmonielehre*, for Universal Edition. The *Altenberg Lieder* were evidently finished by the fall of 1912 and were brought to incomplete performance³ on March 31, 1913, under Schoenberg's direction; the ensuing disturbance became history. Berg, deeply hurt by the public's reaction to his first orchestral work,⁴ never again tried to get the songs performed, though he did publish his own piano-vocal score of the fifth song in 1921,⁵ and we have it on Erwin Stein's authority that Berg considered preparing another version with a smaller orchestra.⁶

Nothing further happened to the *Altenberg Lieder* until 1937, two years after Berg's death, when the Berg *Gedenkschrift* edited by Willi Reich⁷ included a short description of the cycle by Ernst Krenek.

¹ H. F. Redlich, *Alban Berg: Versuch einer Würdigung*, Vienna, 1957, p. 78.

² Willi Reich, *Alban Berg: Leben und Werk*, Zürich, 1963, p. 37.

³ Supposedly the second and fourth songs. Two eyewitness reports ("Tumult im Grossen Musikvereinssaale," from a Viennese newspaper, April 1913, reprinted in the special Schoenberg number of *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, September 1934, pp. 321-23; and *Der Pilger*, the memoirs of Josef Bohuslav Foerster [1917], quoted in Konrad Vogelsang, *Alban Berg: Leben und Werk*, Berlin, 1959, pp. 17-18) differ considerably in their descriptions of the music performed.

⁴ See Reich, *op.cit.*, p. 37, for a brief extract from a letter from Berg to Webern (no date given).

⁵ In a now defunct Dresden periodical, *Menschen*. This score is reprinted in Leibowitz's long article (see note 8).

⁶ Egon Wellesz, "An Alban Berg Manuscript at Oxford," *Tempo*, 1946, No. 5, pp. 3-4.

⁷ Willi Reich (ed.), *Alban Berg*, Vienna, 1937.

In 1945, Berg's widow gave the draft orchestral score of the fourth and fifth songs to an officer of the liberating British Army; this manuscript is now in the Bodleian Library. (See n. 6.) In 1948, René Leibowitz, in a lengthy and admiring but not analytically profound article in the *Musical Quarterly*,⁸ became the first person to declare that Berg, whatever his despair about the abortive 1913 performance, was wrong to have put the *Altenberg Lieder* aside. It was five more years before Leibowitz was heeded; finally, in the winter of 1952-1953, seventeen years after Berg's death, Jascha Horenstein conducted performances of the complete cycle for the first time, in Paris and Rome. These performances were from the manuscript; Universal Edition, shortly thereafter, engaged H. E. Apostel to prepare a fair copy of the orchestral score and in the fall of 1953 published a piano-vocal score.⁹ Since that time there have been a few performances—1959 in New York (Bethany Beardslee and Robert Craft) and Los Angeles (Eva Gustavson and Ingolf Dahl), 1960 at the Venice Biennale (Craft and Magda Laszlo), 1964 in Paris (Pierre Boulez conducting), and perhaps a few more. The New York performance inspired at least one eminent writer, Igor Stravinsky, to publish his profound admiration for the *Altenberg Lieder* (in *Memories and Commentaries*, 1960),¹⁰ and a recording by Craft and Beardslee, with interesting notes by Craft, appeared in the same year.¹¹ Only one other major writer, H. F. Redlich, has ever discussed the *Altenberg Lieder* in analytical terms,¹² and his conclusions about the work overlook a great many of its most important features.

The rarity of performances of the *Altenberg Lieder* is attributable to a single cause: the unavailability of the orchestral score has severely discouraged widespread curiosity and understanding for the work. One can take the piano-vocal score in hand and listen to the recording; in the case of the second, third, and fourth songs one may rightly guess, without having much idea of the exact scoring, that most of the notes are in the published score. In the highly complex reduction of the last song (copied, with some deletions, from the 1921 version made by Berg) one feels to a greater or lesser degree at sea. But no ear or eye is willing to extrapolate beyond the pitifully spare reduction of the opening bars of the first song to guess at what is going on. This article, by one who has patiently pored over a privately owned and utterly rare copy of the full score, is among other things an attempt to

⁸ René Leibowitz, "Alban Berg's Five Orchestra Songs," *Musical Quarterly* 34: 487-511 (October 1948).

⁹ No. 12126.

¹¹ Columbia ML-5428, MS-6103.

¹⁰ Garden City, New York, p. 116n.

¹² Redlich, *op.cit.*, pp. 76-86.

fill in some holes; not many of us will want to rent the score at performance rates merely in order to study the piece.

The reader is hereby urged to do the best he can with the available PV score, correlating it closely with the examples given here in order to fill many of the crucial gaps. He should also take a look at the *Menschen* score of the fifth song, which is reprinted in Leibowitz's *Musical Quarterly* article; this score contains the important extra staff at mm. 11-15, omitted in the Universal score.¹³

Certain structural features of the *Altenberg Lieder* are apparent even without a score. What strikes the listener first is the existence of *Bogenformen*: the close similarity of the first and last lines in the text of Song 3, for example, which makes a kind of central symmetry for the cycle as a whole, or the inverted-arch shape of the entire cycle as regards dimensions—the diminished, Webern-like orchestral resources in the middle three songs and the gigantic forces in the first and last. With the aid of a score, a little examination reveals the *Bogenform* property elsewhere in the cycle: the flute semitone B \flat -B \natural that begins and ends Song 4, the ringing octave F that begins and ends the accompaniment in Song 2, the five-note motive spelled out at the beginning of Song 5 and a simultaneity at the end. The *Bogenform* property is in fact common to all five of the songs; as regards the cycle as a whole, the *Bogenform* is further reinforced by motivic relationships as well as disposition of orchestral forces.

Indeed, when the full score of the *Altenberg Lieder* becomes available at last (perhaps before the copyright expires in the year 2009),* it is likely that Berg's cycle will be recognized as a milestone in the history of motivically organized music. The first and fifth songs in particular are a remarkable demonstration of what Berg could accomplish by relying almost exclusively on motives as a compositional resource. In this regard these two songs are very different from the other three, and therefore will receive the principal weight of discussion here.

The first song begins with an orchestral prelude composed exclusively of eight motives. The contrasting "transitional" section, during which the voice is introduced, is non-motivic or "free"; then another motivic section concludes the song, using four of the prelude motives and four new ones. The fifth song matches the first in orchestral complement and declamatory extremes but is constructed quite differently. It is a modern (i.e., not Baroque unithematic) passacaglia using three principal motives and two subsidiary ones.

¹³ An important error is common to both scores: in m. 38, right hand, the third and fourth chords, the bottom note in each case is G \sharp , not G or F.

* Recent information indicates a somewhat more imminent publication of the score—[Eds.].

PERSPECTIVES OF NEW MUSIC

The three principal motives all appear in the first song and one of them also appears in the second, another in the fourth; one of the two subsidiary motives is found in the third song as well.

A table of motives in the *Altenberg Lieder* is an aid to understanding the above paragraph. Greek-lettered motives, except ζ, appear in more than one song. Roman-numeraled motives appear only in the first song. (Order numbers in this discussion are consecutive from 1.) Some relationships between the motives are obvious, others not so obvious; their significance for the cycle will shortly be made clear. (See Ex. 1.)

α

(Songs 1, 2, and 5)

β

(Songs 1, 4, and 5)

γ

(Songs 1 and 5)

δ

(Songs 1 and 5)

ε

(Songs 3 and 5)

ζ¹

ζ²

(Song 5)

I

II

Ex. 1

SOME NOTES ON THE UNKNOWN *ALTENBERG LIEDER*

III

IV

V

VI

VII

etc.

VIII

IX

X

Ex. 1 (cont.)

The first song

The opening bars present a wonderfully complex tapestry of motives I-VI, all in the middle-to-high register, scored as follows: I, piccolo (sounding 8va), clarinet 1, glockenspiel (8va), xylophone (each note delayed ♩) and half the first violins *sul tasto* ("ghost"), all marked ppp; II, alternating trumpets 2 and 3, muted, marked pppp; III, utes 1 and 2 and second violins pizzicato, arranged as in Ex. 2;

Ex. 2

IV, celesta with imitating harp, as in Ex. 3;

Ex. 3

V, piano, with $\frac{7}{8}$ rhythm, twice each measure, pp, *una corda* and damper pedal depressed; and VI, alternating clarinets 2 and 3 and half the violas (Ex. 4).

Ex. 4

The net result, for the first statement of I, looks in short score like Ex. 5.

Parenthetically, we may observe here some likely instances of influences on Berg, most probably resulting from his *Brotarbeit* for Universal Edition. For example, the opening bars of the orchestral prelude have more than just the static, minutely filigreed orchestral texture in common with the beginning of *Gurrelieder*. Specifically, one is moved to compare the piccolo parts of m. 3 of *Gurrelieder* with motive I and its rhythmic follower (glockenspiel-xylophone), and the

Mässige Achtel ($\text{♩} = \text{ca } 96$) Alles *ppp*, ohne Steigerung

Ex. 5

violins in the same measure have their counterpart in the violin "ghost" of I (Ex. 6).

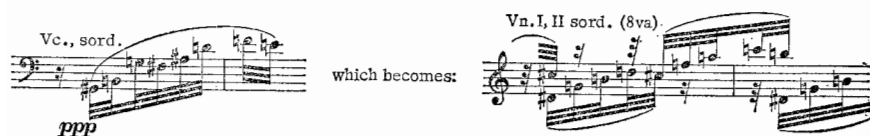
Ex. 6

In m. 4 of *Gurrelieder*, over the same melody as before, there is a concealed diminution, reflected in the I-VI diminution of Berg's song (Ex. 7).

Ex. 7

PERSPECTIVES OF NEW MUSIC

Another instance has been pointed out by Redlich, who notes that Berg's IV is very like the opening melody of the *Entrückung* in Schoenberg's Opus 10 Quartet (Ex. 8).



Ex. 8

(Berg was working on the reduction of this quartet as late as July 5, 1912, for a letter to Schoenberg of that date mentions the great difficulties he had been having with the transcription.) Another possible source for IV is the prominent celesta passage, repeated several times, which occurs in the second of Schoenberg's Five Pieces for Orchestra, Opus 16, which had been published in full score in the same year (Ex. 9).



Ex. 9

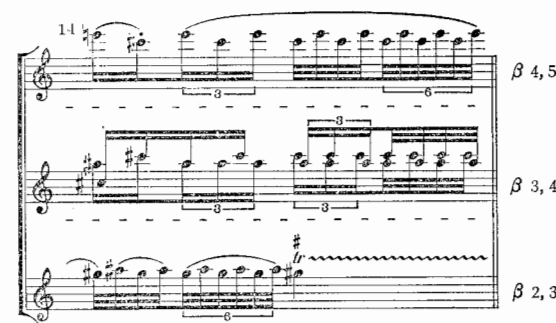
The overlapping texture of the prelude in Song 1 continues for five measures (it would begin identically again only after 157½ measures), or four complete statements of I, which, having the most orchestral tone-weight and being placed highest, carries the pulse of the music. At m. 6 the entire network begins to move upwards through a remarkable series of transformations. The first motive to move is VI, which shifts upward by regular whole-tone transpositions. I ascends by a process not as regular as VI's, undergoing alterations on the way (see mm. 6-11 of the PV score), until the two intersect at m. 12 (VI dividing) and settle down on four pitches, E, C♯, A♯, and G♯, at m. 14 (Ex. 10).

Motive III also begins to ascend at m. 6, in one-measure steps, by an expanding-interval transposition sequence a semitone larger each time (here shown reduced) (Ex. 11).

SOME NOTES ON THE UNKNOWN ALTENBERG LIEDER



Ex. 10



Ex. 11

Motive II in the trumpets ascends chromatically, beginning just before m. 6, but not by any regular metrical pattern; this can be seen by the number of times II is stated at each transposition level from the beginning of the song: 13, 8, 3, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 2 (A, B♭, A♭), settling on B♭ and A♭ in another rhythmic acceleration (Ex. 12). (The graduated rhythmic accelerations are applied everywhere among the motives at this point, so as to create the thickest imaginable rhythmic texture, as if the entire orchestra were performing, every man for himself, an increasingly rapid trill. A better-known example of this in Berg's music is found at the end of *Reigen*, the second of the Three Pieces for Orchestra, Opus 6.)

Ex. 12

The progression of V, in the piano, is not strict but does maintain certain regularities; its most important change is to an “inverted” form, where the simple procedure of lowering the middle voice produces an exact inversion of the intervallic content (Ex. 13).

Ex. 13

The most elaborate transformation in these initial measures is that exhibited by IV, as in Ex. 14.

Beginning in m. 6, the harp anticipates the celesta, reversing the previous “dux-comes” relationship, by starting on a chromatic ascent. The chromatic transposition of IV continues literally until m. 8, when various internal alterations begin to take place, culminating in a new IV at m. 9. This new IV is immediately recognizable as a transposition of the motive α which pervades Song 5 and also occurs as a little flourish in Song 2. From m. 9 onwards the upward progression of α is strictly chromatic until measure 13, when α undergoes further transformation to the climactic chord in the second half of m. 14.

Ex. 14

Beginning in the second half of m. 14, the entire pitch content of the orchestral aggregate is, with the exception of the F in the oboes, violins and cellos (which play the important melody δ about to be discussed), restricted to the pitches G, A \flat , B \flat , D \flat , and E. These pitch-classes, occurring in m. 14 as a simultaneity, form, in the order stated, another motive, β , which is fundamental to Song 5 and also occurs briefly in Song 4 (mm. 10-14).

Of necessity we have thus far ignored the melody δ which begins in m. 9 (coincident with the emergence of α from the IV-transformations) and to which the motivic tapestry just discussed is an accompaniment. (See Ex. 15.)

Ex. 15

The successive pitches in δ encompass all twelve tones of the chromatic scale. (In this form, δ is not immediately so recognizable as having this property as in its "Ur"-form as one of the principal motives of Song 5. It is probably the first overtly dodecapronic melody written by any of the three great Viennese, antedating the much more serially employed twelve-tone melody in *Wozzeck*, Act I, Scene 4, and also the as yet invisible twelve-tone melody in Schoenberg's unfinished *Jakobsleiter*.) At its climax, the new melody intersects with I ($\delta_9, 12 = I_{1, 2}$).

The enormous orchestral climax at mm. 14-15 serves to emphasize, dynamically, registrally, and rhythmically, the progression β - γ (Ex. 16).

Ex. 16

The new chord γ is stated in the form of downward arpeggios by trumpets 2 and 3, glockenspiel, xylophone, and pizzicato second violins (Ex. 17),

Ex. 17

and by the celesta (Ex. 14). The γ -arpeggiation is accompanied by various downward processes akin to the earlier ascent, including a chromatic scale (piccolo; flutes; bassoons, in triplet ♩), both species of whole-tone scale (clarinets, in ♩); (see m. 15 of the PV score), violin glissandi (alternating between B and F in violins I and II), a harp glissando on the diminished-seventh chord F \sharp -A-C-E \flat , and a piano passage which except for its γ -overlapping initial chord does not fit any of the above. (See Ex. 18.)

Ex. 18

The whole of this orchestral avalanche serves as accompaniment to I $_2, 3, 4, 5$, played note by note in the violas and cellos, and also by brass (trumpet 1, horns 3 and 4, horn 2, and horn 1 respectively) which hold the notes through the length of the measure after each entrance. (See Ex. 15.) It is interesting that save for the "suspended" E every note on the downbeat of m. 15 is a chord tone of γ , regardless of where the various downward scales arrive at later points in the measure. That the harp chord, which does not entirely fit the γ chord, does not enter until one sixty-fourth note after the downbeat (the entire glissando is written out in the score, in regular sixty-fourth notes), is also evidence of Berg's intention to define the β - γ progression clearly. After m. 15 the established patterns of descent disintegrate rapidly,

but in all cases with a view to establishing new pitch-relations which become important for preparing a second, lesser climax at m. 18. A harmonic outline is provided in Ex. 19.

or, in measures 15-16:

chromatic contrary motion

equivalent to V

the same tritone

Ex. 19

It is evident that the tritone-fifth relationship of motive V is involved, but more important is the B-F tritone itself. It serves as a supporting harmony for all of m. 16 and half of m. 17, thereby becoming the starting point for a "wedge" of two chromatic lines in contrary motion, a basic feature of Berg's technique in nearly all of his music. The structural importance of the B-F tritone in these measures makes some of the seeming chaos of m. 15 a little more understandable.

That the B-F tritone divides two kinds of scale (a whole-tone scale and a chromatic scale) into symmetrical halves is emphasized in the content of these measures, whose scalic foundation is recapitulated in the double-bass canon. (See Ex. 20.)

As rapidly as the patterns in the treble register disintegrate, they are replaced by alternating thirds, rhythmically accelerating to a trill on C-E and D-F (celesta and trumpets 2 and 3; first violins and flute 1; oboes 1 and 2; clarinets 2 and 3), with the xylophone and glockenspiel maintaining a constant sixteenth-note pulse. The trill continues in a crescendo until m. 18, where it quickly falls off in volume and becomes slower and orchestrally lighter.

The smaller climax here marks the first appearance in the *Altenberg Lieder* of harmony so spare as to permit total recognition and association with basically triadic functions, including a strong C major; and the measures following, thus far the most unhurried and orchestrally spare measures in the work, give strong if fleeting "tonal" impressions. The emergence from the motivic jungle is preparation for the first appearance of the voice, which makes a striking entrance into a rather Scriabin-like harmony (see mm. 18-24 in the PV score). The chromatic lines in contrary motion which form the lowermost voices must of necessity form vertical relationships which are equal in

(8va)

Picc. *f*

3 Cl. *f* +B. Cl.

Vn. I (div.) *ff* trem. *f* gliss. sul A gliss.

Fl. II Bn. I *f*

Cl. II B. Cl. *f*

Vn. I (div.) *f* gliss. sul D *f*

Cb. (div.) (8va bassa) *mf* gliss. *mf*

Cb. (div.) (8va bassa) *mf*

Ex. 20

pitch-class content to other verticals in the progression. It is noteworthy, then, that Berg singled out two such relationships for emphasis, thereby adding new support to the design. The A and G emphasized in the second climax (m. 18) are duplicated in the voice first actually enters (mouth closed, m. 20); the important F and B emphasized in the descent from the first climax (mm. 15-16) are duplicated with the first full entrance of the voice ("Seele," m. 22). Furthermore, the last point reached by the chromatic lines, at the fourth beat of m. 24, when new departures commence, is the octave D (harp; not shown in PV score, but see Ex. 25), which pitch-class then becomes a monomial motivic entity for the remainder of the song.

The musical foreground appears to fall into two layers, one a strictly linear procedure of two chromatic lines, and the other a "harmonic thickening" of triadic construction superposed upon the linear procedure, the whole being adjusted to obtain or preserve certain verticals of prominence. In mm. 23-24, the orchestral accompaniment falls into two chromatically diverging parts, a descending bass line and an ascending chord pattern of notes from the whole-tone scale, the upper three voices forming an augmented triad. Naturally no strict tonal sense is preserved here, but rather an implication of various keys.

From the middle of m. 24, Berg starts building another enormous climax, culminating at m. 29; to do this he sets in motion further motivic processes, some of which are new and others of which have appeared previously. These motivic processes form the total source material for the remainder of the song. The initiating factor of this new section is the long D pedal beginning in the timpani (last quarter of m. 24, marked "gleichmässiges cresc.—bis ff") and coincident with the octave D which the diverging chromatic lines have reached.

As the D is introduced, a new motive, VII, appears as a long countermelody beginning in the English horn (doubling "stürmen" in the voice) and continuing, adding more instruments (Ex. 21). This seemingly haphazard collection of pitches is actually quite rigidly organized, in accordance with the following intervallic succession: minor seventh, semitone, minor third, semitone. Whether the melodic interval is up or down in this scheme seems to be at least partially governed by the registers (octave equivalence is assumed) in which the instruments are most powerful (crescendo through ff). Berg splits the melody before the climax, presumably for more tone-weight, while nonetheless conserving the pattern; the scheme is strict throughout.

SOME NOTES ON THE UNKNOWN ALTENBERG LIEDER

VII:

Ex. 21

The next new motive to appear is a chromatic line of parallel fourth-chords, terminating in an augmented triad by an upward skip (VIII) (Ex. 22).

VIII:

Ex. 22

IX, the third new motive, merely adds a semitone and a whole tone to the linearized notes of V, and proceeds as in Ex. 23.

IX:

Ex. 23

The "old" motives employed in the new section may now be examined. In m. 25, IV (the celesta motive of the prelude) makes its reappearance in the basses. Immediately following, in the cellos in m. 26, is the exact retrograde of IV, but with the original melodic contour preserved. The violas then take up IV, this time altering it further by reversing the notes of the original IV in successive dyads (2, 1, 4, 3, 6, 5, 8, 7), not preserving the contour. Finally, just before the explosion at m. 29, IV appears in the first violins, with the second note missing, and the remaining notes haphazardly arranged but bearing some resemblance to the retrograde IV (8, 7, 6, 4, 5, 3, 1). The final note of this statement intersects with the third note of IX and completes the latter motive's descent. Meanwhile the upbeat to the explosion (first half of m. 29) has a massive statement of IV and its diminution, both in an identically altered form, and so placed that both terminate simultaneously. It is interesting that IV, VIII and IX are all located so as to intersect (B_b) on their climactic notes (Ex. 24).

Following the climax at the middle of m. 29, in which the fullest orchestral resources are deployed, is the "coda" of the song, in which a great variety of instruments is used, but in continually varying small combinations. The motives are identical with those used in the preceding measures but are constantly tossed about the orchestra in short epigrammatic bunches, emphasizing upbeats and downbeats and fighting the prominent melody-notes of the vocal part. As we try to dissect the motivic texture of these final measures, it becomes apparent that two motives have existed before which we may have overlooked. The more obvious of these is V, an "old" motive, which appeared as a pedal chord played by the harmonium in m. 28. The other is the pedal D, which in the coda achieves fully significant motivic status (X). Here it is quoted in full from its first appearance, together with the indeterminately pitched notes (percussion,

Ex. 24 (cont.)

strings) which are best associated with the D because the bass drum-, tamtam-, and cymbal-rolls in mm. 30-32 seem like a continuation of the timpani roll. (See Ex. 25.)

Ex. 24

Ex. 25

PERSPECTIVES OF NEW MUSIC

35 36 37 38

pppp
Vn. I, II harmonics
gliss. sul E

(p) Va., Vc., Cb.
"Durch Streichen auf dem [sic]
Löchern des Saitenhalters her-
vorbringen!"

Ex. 25 (cont.)

As for the orchestral aggregate, a short score (do *not* rely on the piano score for this!) is helpful in pointing out some of the inter-motivic relationships (Ex. 26).

2 Fl. (Picc. 8va)
2 Ob., Vn. I, II,
3 Cl., Tpt. I)
Tpt. II
Va.
(Celesta,
doubling Voice,
omitted)

29 30

Vn. I, II pizz.
Voice
Cb. sliding pizz.
3 Tbn.
3 Tpt.
Harm.
Tbn. IV sord.
Harm.
Vc.
2 Bn.
Cbn.
Tuba
Vc., Hn. III, IV

Xyl.
Ob. I, E. Hn.,
Ob. II
B. Cl.

31 32

Harp
Vn. II div. col legno
Vn. II
(Voice) Bn. I
Vn. I solo
E. Hn.
2 Cl.
Ob. I
(Harm.)
half Va.
Hn. II sord.
Hn. I sord.
Vc.
FLI

Ex. 26

Example 27 shows the motives in isolation, except for V and X.

It is to be noted that the motives show progressive shortening, in many cases with each statement so arranged that a harmonic or melodic relationship with other statements is present. It is evident from the short score that associations between different motives exist in great enough number to indicate that their placement has struc-

SOME NOTES ON THE UNKNOWN ALTENBERG LIEDER

33 34 35 36 37 38

Vn. I solo
(Harm.)
Vn. II solo
3 Tbn.
Vc. col legno
Vn. I solo pizz.
Picc.
Celesta
Vn. I, II harmonics
gliss. sul E
(Harm.)
Cbn.
Va., Vc., Cb.
(bowed on the
string-holes of
the tailpiece)

Ex. 26 (cont.)

Orchestral motives in "Coda" (after climax at measure 29)

IV:
up a minor third
Vn. I pizz. 8va - - -
(29) 30 31 first six notes (at pitch)
Hn. II sord. first five notes ...
Vn. II pizz. "Kleingeschriebene Noten ev. auslassen" p pp
Hn. I sord. Vc. div. pizz.
32 33 34 35 Cbn. 8va bassa - - - entirety at pitch

VII:
3 Tpt. 30 Vc. 31 bounce 32 2 CL E. Hn. - grell
(29) mf f mf mf
Bb in score 33 (should be A) 34 35 8va - - - 7 Picc. 36-8 pp nichtig (first ascending VII pattern in Coda)

Ex. 27

PERSPECTIVES OF NEW MUSIC

VIII:

2 Bn., Cbn. (29) 30
8va bassa
Harp 33
3 Tbn. sord. *p* *klagend*
Vn. II div. col legno tratto *mf*
A-minoriness
31
34 (*vrit.*)
35-8

IX:

Tbn. IV sord. (29) 30
B. Cl. 31
Bn. I 32
half Va. (non div.) *p*
Vn. II solo pizz. 35
33 34 36-8

Vocal motives

I:

25 26 (*sempre ff*) 27
1 2 3 4 5
Auch du hast sie, gleich der Natur.
intrusion intrusion
Voice 29 *mf* 30 31 32 33
Und ü-ber bei - den liegt noch ein trü-ber Hauch, eh' das Ge-
Celesta (8va) *(pp-p)*
31 32 33
wölk sich ver - zog!
Vn. I solo *pppp* (*loco*) (kein Bogenwechsel!)
pppp

Ex. 27 (cont.)

SOME NOTES ON THE UNKNOWN ALTENBERG LIEDER

(7)
34 35 36 37-8
pppp
(kein Bogenwechsel!)
 β plus two notes

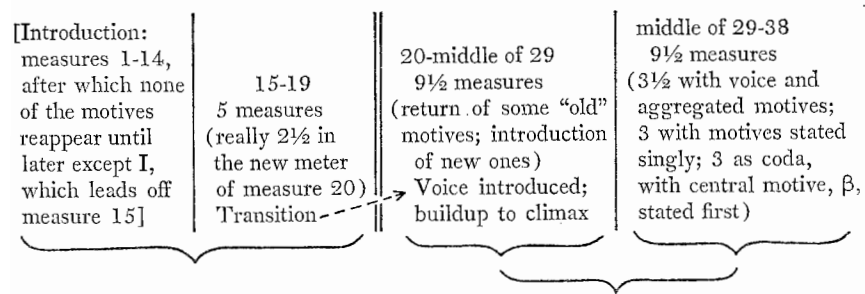
Ex. 27 (cont.)

tural significance. It might be said that their arrangement is directed toward the establishment of a feeling of A minor in the midst of the highly complex and pointillistic texture of these measures. As the song progresses toward its final measures, the tonal-modal feeling of A minor—E minor (themselves not far away from the C-orientation earlier in the song) becomes more pronounced, because the texture departs from its established procedure of ejaculating all the motives at once, and now states them singly, each in its unshortened entirety, until only β remains; underneath all this, the V-motive harmonium chord sounds continuously.

Two motives constitute the vocal part from m. 25 to the end. I appears with two intrusions, B and C#, with a duplicate E (I_2). β is unfolded note by note, each alternating with the first note, a process that is a common one with this motive in Song 5; the violin and celesta doubling continues past the last note of the voice with two extra notes, A and E \flat (thus giving a clue to the origin of the β motive itself, that is, an altered expanding-interval sequence), and the whole collection is sounded again in a celesta arpeggio in m. 36.

The song defines a *Bogenform* in an abstract sense, in that the A and A' are made up of motivic tissue and the B (mm. 18-24) lacks any of the motives found elsewhere. The form is also defined by the existence of titanic orchestral climaxes, and the crescendo of the A has its polar opposite in the decrescendo of the A'. To the ear, however, the A' sounds more like a continuation of B, and hence the part of the song following the frenzied pulsation before m. 18 seems more like Part Two of a bipartite construction.

One way to diagram the song would be this:



The fifth song

This song not only summarizes the cyclic structure of the *Altenberg Lieder* but gives a superlative demonstration of the capacity of Berg's intellect and imagination in working within a strict form and with limited motivic material, for this passacaglia is one of the most spectacular works ever composed in this form. It uses five themes, of which three, α, β, and δ (see Ex. 1), are of primary structural significance. The other two are ε, from the *third* song, and ζ (the Greek letter *zeta* is used here to preserve unanimity of notation, although the motive it represents is not found in any of the other songs). There is also an extract (mm. 37-38) of chords lifted bodily from the third song, and another single quotation, γ of the first song. It should be noted that ε and ζ are both distinctive in that they contain the interval of either a major or minor sixth, both of which interval-classes were conspicuously absent from the motives of the first song. One might also contend that the two species of ζ are outgrowths of I from the first song; the contours are similar and several of the intervals are the same though ordered differently.

Berg departed from his usual procedure by numbering the fifth song in regular five-bar groups, beginning with No. 1 at m. 6. These numbers only roughly coincide with the variations of the passacaglia, of which there are nine (after the initial statements of α, β, and δ), with fifty-five measures in all. Since the variations often overlap one onto the next, they are referred to here by a more or less arbitrary numbering, though this numbering should be readily understood.

Though the total note-content of the passacaglia, unlike much of Song 1, is by no means restricted to motives alone, the extent to which motives are used is great. Numerous instances of motive-overlapping and motivic variation occur, all with a view to greater structural plasticity for the whole without loss of coherence. It will be seen that the various elements introduced by Berg in combination

with the motives for enriching the harmony themselves show a certain organization. Moreover, the motives are variously utilized for the establishment of a true harmonic bass, and serve in combination to delineate strong harmonies.

The texture of this song, indeed, seems much more truly harmonic than does that of most of the first song, despite the fact that there exists no system of vertical or bass-ic organizing principles. It seems, rather, that Berg arranged his motives with at least a partial intention of producing prominent vertical relationships of a type common to music before his own time (dominant-seventh chords, for example, or chords built of superposed fourths, whose extensive application in Schoenberg's First Chamber Symphony, Opus 9, had its seeds in *Beckmesser's Serenade*), without attempting to produce an organized succession of harmonies linked through classical procedures. That some motives are arranged in non-normal fashion (for instance, the appearance of β, mm. 12-14, a minor third higher and in a rhythmically altered form) suggests only that Berg composed some passages as all composers have at one time or another composed canons and other strict polyphonic procedures, namely by fitting together by trial and error various motives in various forms and transpositions, until the desired, agreeable, or acceptable vertical structure appears. The result of all this manipulation is neither a "common-practice" harmony of a degree so complex that ordinary analytical methods must be stretched to the point of absurdity, nor a harmony totally devoid of strong classical functions as was much of Schoenberg's music of the time; rather, the harmonic impression perceived is perhaps a few steps beyond that of the works of Schoenberg's "crisis" period (the Opus 7 Quartet, the First Chamber Symphony, *Pelleas und Melisande*), or of Berg's own Opus 2 songs. The disturbing feature, or perhaps the reassuring feature, is that while by removal from context the juxtaposition of a simple chord and a quite complex one (mm. 35-36, for instance) may seem absurd, this whole song gives the impression of great coherence.

The first five measures are a clear statement of β, in a register in which it has never before occurred (bass clarinet, plucked and bowed cellos in unison). δ enters on the second beat of m. 5, and α on the downbeat of m. 7 (taking up the E where β left off; this is at the transposition interval a tritone higher than in its original appearance at m. 9 of the first song, but at the same transposition as its last statement in mm. 12-13 of that song). The δ thus stated preserves the identical pitch-class content of the δ in the first song, but with completely changed rhythm.

By the second beat of m. 10 (*Ein wenig breiter; the first variation*) all three of the motives, except α , have been introduced in their entirety. In m. 10 δ begins again from the middle register (violas and first horn) doubled a major third below for its first four notes. This doubling voice (cellos and second horn) soon digresses, however, and becomes an elaborated form of β which simultaneously enriches the harmony (Ex. 28).

Ex. 28

The accents so placed, and the short notes on the stopped third horn (see the *Menschen* score), emphasize β . Coincident with the beginning of δ in m. 10 is ϵ in the oboe, starting on F (δ_{11}) resulting from the octave transfer of the end of δ turned back on itself. This ϵ is a whole tone higher than the ϵ in the third song. The downward leap of D to F \sharp in m. 12 (all ϵ 's in the fifth song have final minor-sixth downward skips, whereas the ϵ in the third song had a final major sixth) is immediately echoed by the new motive ζ^2 in the third trombone (partial doubling by bassoon 2; m. 13) and then by ζ^1 in the first violins and first trumpet (m. 14). Neatly overlapping the end of ϵ (m. 12, third beat) is β moving in $\text{♩} \mid \text{♩} \mid \text{♩} \mid \text{♩} \mid$, a minor third higher than normal, in the second violins (partially doubled by celesta). As if this already complicated texture were not enough, Berg adds a fragment of δ (6, 7, 8, 9, 10) in the tuba, to form a bass line, beginning in m. 13; the line continues in the basses (m. 15), following a ζ -intersection, in such a way as to overlap a new statement of δ a fourth higher. A short score of these measures may help to clarify all these relationships somewhat (Ex. 29).

It is remarkable how many strong tonal associations result from the complex linear organization of the first variation. The D \flat in m. 11 sounds as a tonic strong enough to centralize the harmony momentarily. However, a strong D major is heard soon afterwards, the result of three D-F \sharp downskips.

In the *second variation* (mm. 16-20) the operating motives are δ (in the bass, a fourth higher, as noted before), β in the harp and bass clarinet (unfolding like "und über beiden . . ." in the first song), and, most important, the first appearance of the voice (ζ^1 , "Hier ist

Ex. 29

Friede.”) echoing the first-violin melody of mm. 14-15. This entrance is followed (m. 20) by the beginning of a δ whose continuation belongs to the third variation (mm. 21-25), but this beginning shows most clearly the identity

$$\zeta^1_{3, 4, 5} = \delta_{1, 2, 3}$$

The δ in the bass is elaborated in other instruments in various ways that do not constitute strict *Klangfarbenmelodie*, though that feature is elsewhere present (Ex. 30).

Ex. 30

Two other features of the second variation are the doubling parts (piano; glockenspiel and celesta) which emphasize various important tones in the vocal part, and the pattern of chromatic descent, beginning in m. 15 with a new figure whose rhythm is clearly derived from ϵ (Ex. 31).

Ex. 31

This new figure gives rise to many triads, and its pattern of oscillating thirds is like that at m. 18 of the first song. The chromatic descents appear first as attachments to ζ^2 and δ , and may therefore be regarded as continuations of these motives.

In the *third variation* the featured motive is the first nine notes of δ in the voice (doubled by trumpet 1), accompanied by various transpositions of β in new rhythmic forms. The various dispositions of β are shown in Ex. 32.

Ex. 32

In addition to these short β 's is a β bass at the normal pitch (contrabassoon, horn 4, piano, harp, tuba). The arrangement of attacks and dynamics here (Ex. 33) is interesting.

Ex. 33

It is curious that Berg should have made such a complicated affair, including staggered breathing (probably not physically necessary) and a dynamic canon, out of what is really only a simple unison texture (horn 4 plays an octave above).

In m. 24, β appears in the low strings and trombones in modified form, answered similarly by second violins and violas; these modifications are pointed up by the resumption of the slower rhythmic pattern which began the succession of short β 's. The original contour is scarcely preserved intact in these modified β 's, but its progressions are interesting: in m. 25, myriad *Klangfarben* doublings of the disintegrating β line occur, producing new "lines" in which the glockenspiel melody (mm. 25-26, up-stems in top staff of Ex. 34) may be regarded as a mixed-up retrograde fragment of δ , in fact the retrograde of the "ideal" δ , a perfect "chromatic wedge."

The descending chromatic lines first seen in the second variation are more extensively employed in the third, forming additions to each short β , and in m. 25 forming a feminine cadence which elides neatly onto the beginning of the next variation; the intersections of the altered β 's with the most prominent chromatic lines suggest that the β 's may have been specifically altered to accomplish these intersections. (See Ex. 35.)

Ex. 34

Ex. 35

Also in m. 25, which is fairly clearly an overlap between the third variation and the fourth variation, is the reappearance of α (harp; trombone 4, bass clarinet, clarinet 1), repeated immediately two octaves higher by the solo violin (m. 26). This second α is placed so as to intersect in its first note with the final note of the glockenspiel melody referred to above; it also intersects in its fourth note with β_3 , forming a very felicitous harmonic texture with the voice and the descending flute 1 (see Exx. 34 and 35). The voice melody in this variation is β produced by the following process of unfolding: [1, in flute 1 and second violins;] 2, 1; 3, 2, 1; 4, 3, 2, 1; 5, 4, 3,

2, 1; this recalls earlier vocal treatment of this motive (“und über beiden . . . verzog,” in the first song; or the reverse of the above process, “Ich habe gewartet, gewartet, oh, gewartet!” in the fourth song). It has an elaborated doubling by the English horn in mm. 28-29 (Ex. 36),

Ex. 36

whose first four notes have the same interval sequence as those of δ . The only other motive in the fourth variation, besides those mentioned, is δ , beginning in m. 26 in the solo viola, and broken off after nine notes, like the δ in the preceding variation; its seventh and eighth notes are reversed, doubtless so that the descending sixth, prominent in the next variation, is brought out. That material not specifically motivic in this variation is also of some interest; it consists of short chromatic *agrément*-like figures, some of them intersecting with motives at various spots. The clarinet trill in m. 26 doubles the harp melody (α); the answering flute trill parallels the second α in the solo violin; the trill in horn 3 duplicates the flute. The “slow trills” in trumpet 2 and trombone 3 are exclusively chromatic (Ex. 37).

Ex. 37

The descending semitone which concludes α is reflected in all these trills, but especially in the C-D \flat alterations in the upper strings, which prepare the new δ in the next variation at m. 29 ($\alpha_{7,8} = \delta_{2,1}$).

The fifth variation (mm. 30-34) brings all three principal motives together again, in a rhythm that keeps them all moving at the same pace throughout, without compression or overlapping, and prepares the largest climax in the song, at m. 35. δ leads off in the upbeat to m. 30 (tremolando violins, trumpet 1, trombone 1). Simultaneously

a descending-major-sixth bass leads into α in m. 31; the sixthness-relationship to ζ is probably intentional, for Berg placed a footnote in the contrabass part saying "in no case is the upper D \sharp to be played." (See Ex. 38.)

(29) δ 30 31

Vc.(Va.) Cb. α

pp δ fragment pp*

*)Wenn kein C-Saiter [sic] vorhanden, dann E-Saite auf Dis herabstimmen, keinesfalls das obere Dis spielen!

Ex. 38

The choice of notes in this bass melody seems to be dictated by harmonic considerations (compare the duplication, m. 30, of F in the voice and third trombone). The same is probably true of the harmonic thickening of β which begins in m. 30 and is carried on in three different registers, with rhythmic-canonic devices complicated by the bassoons playing α in the ϵ rhythm (Ex. 39).

Picc. (Sva) 31 32

Va., 2 Fl. 2 Fl. +2 Ob.

Vc., Hn. I, II 3 Cl. +Tbn. III, IV sord.

2 Bn., Cbn. (8va bassa)

mf mf f f

Ex. 39

The voice F is the strongest F in these measures. The alternation F-E-F in mm. 31-32 reflects the same alternation in the δ melody in mm. 9-10. The last five notes of δ are placed up an octave to secure brilliance for the preparation of the climactic A major chord in m. 35, which in part results from the intersection of α_7 (C \sharp), β_5 (E), and δ_{12} (E) with the fullest resources of the orchestra; this chord initiates the sixth variation.

The A major chord on the downbeat of the *sixth variation* becomes minor on the third quarter of the measure when α completes itself (α_7 [C \sharp] \rightarrow α_8 [C]). Aside from a chordal statement of β (harp, m. 36) coincident with the suspended E from δ_{12} , the remainder of the variation is occupied with the presentation of the two subsidiary motives, ζ and ϵ (the latter also intersecting with δ_{12}). The β chord initiates the upper, leading voice of a three-part canon of ϵ (the first two parts omitting the F : $\epsilon_2 = \beta_5$) with the rhythmic pattern displaced a beat later than that of the original, so that E becomes the prolonged note; the canonic parts are 1) voice and violin 1; 2) horn 1; 3) cellos. At m. 37 the divided violas quote the exact chords found at mm. 9-10 of the third song (flutes, horns), descending a major sixth; these chords are echoed by the trombones (doubling violas) in m. 38, playing the ζ^2 motive. The chords thus stated agree well with the underlying ϵ canonic process. The ζ^2 in the trombones is echoed further by ζ^1 in the voice ("Hier ist Friede!") and violins in octaves in the final measure of the variation.

The *seventh variation* (mm. 40-44) treats ζ^1 - δ in the voice like the similar occurrence of these motives in the second and third variations (mm. 15-24), except that where the identity $\zeta^1_{3, 4, 5} = \delta_{1, 2, 3}$ occurs, the melodies are elided rather than the notes duplicated. The vocal line is interrupted briefly between phrases, but the piano supplies the missing notes (see Ex. 40). The parts underneath (trombones, strings) move chromatically with the lowest voice, terminating on an E (m. 42) coincident with the beginning of α (harp, bass clarinet). α and the chromatic ending of δ are the only materials used at all in this variation, which, incidentally, is the only variation in the song in which β is not present (Ex. 40).

At the beginning of the *eighth variation* (mm. 45-49) δ continues downward chromatically (compare mm. 15-24) while α completes itself. The two lines coincide in their last two notes but the δ line continues down further, without the voice, two more semitones to B \flat (m. 47). The motivic arrangement of this and the final variation is of the greatest interest. A pedal point on G, introduced in m. 45 (basses and tamtam) is the focal point for a remarkable series of

PERSPECTIVES OF NEW MUSIC

evolutions and transformations of β . The melody in the first cellos and first horn beginning just before m. 47 is another "unfolding" of β without the terminal E. The accompaniment to this melody is a well-ordered chromatic harmony (see Ex. 40) which features β (without

39 40 41 42

Hier ist Friedel Hier tropft

Vn. I Vn. II Bn. I 3 Tbn. B. Cl. Harp (col 8va)

+Piano (8ves) -Vn. I, II (Piano)

43 44 45

Schnee lei-se in Was-ser

+Hn. IV Cb. pizz. (8va bassa) Tamtam

46 47 48

la-chen...

Vc. div. a5 ponticello; 4 Hn. + Tuba (all sord. except Hn. I) (Piano) (Harp) +Harp (col 8va bassa)

Ex. 40

SOME NOTES ON THE UNKNOWN ALTENBERG LIEDER

49 50 51 52 53 54

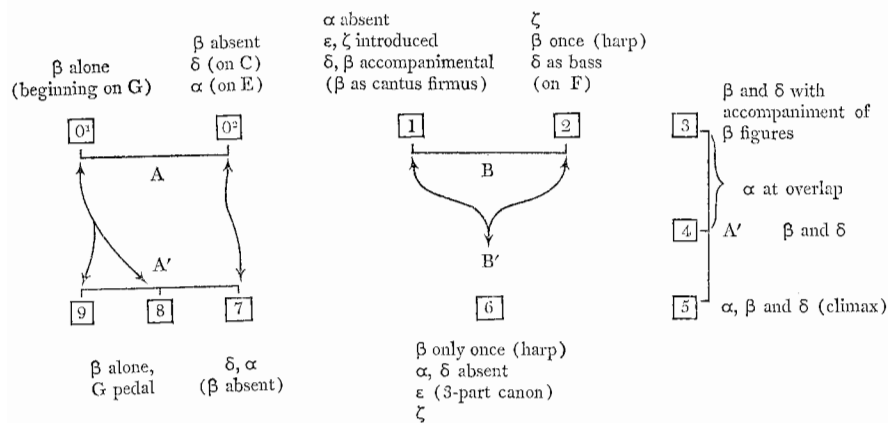
Solo Vn. I sord. Tbn. IV sord. Tbn. III sord. Solo Vn. I sord. Cb. loco +Timp. +Vn. II pizz. Harp loco +Timp. -Cb. Tpt. I sord. Tbn. I sord. another Solo Vn. I sord. Solo Va. sord. Solo Vc. sord.

Ex. 40 (cont.)

$D_b = \beta_4$) as a chord on the downbeat of m. 47. The individual voices of the two lower moving parts form groupings of three-note periodicity, and the third cello (third horn) has a succession of falling fifths. The melodic process comes to rest on the downbeat chord of the ninth variation (m. 50) which the reader may remember as γ in the first song (the downbeat of m. 15). This chord (emphasized by the sfz in the horns-tuba cutoff) then is transformed, note by note, into β , by the trombones and first trumpet, which singly arpeggiate γ downwards and come to rest at the appropriate β note. The G pedal has simultaneously been climbing upward by octaves until it skips to the high G in the solo violin, coincident with the first β note in the fourth trombone; thereupon β appears, note by note, in harmonic inversion, the solo strings spelling it downwards in a sort of "register palindrome": first solo violin up two octaves, second solo violin up one octave, first solo viola neither up nor down, zero octaves, second solo viola down one octave, cello solo down two

octaves. The trombones-trumpet β is bunched in the middle register, whereas the upside-down solo-string β is so spread out as to surround the former. The solo-string β is sustained to the end, but the brass β engages in a bit of *Klangfarbenmelodie* (oboes and bassoons; flutes and clarinets; piano; harp) in a rhythm often heard in the song, that of the initial repeated notes of the ϵ melody. This rhythm, so often abstracted from ϵ and superposed on something entirely different, forecasts Berg's later and abundant use of isorhythm, a twentieth-century reincarnation of a technique nearly five hundred years extinct (compare *Wozzeck*, Act III, Scene 3; the last movement of the Chamber Concerto; the third movement of the *Lyric Suite*).

The general *Bogenform* of this song may be schematically expressed thus (the numbers in the squares refer to the variations):



In general, where they occur: β begins on the first measure of each variation, δ on the upbeat to each variation.

The *Bogenform* is not confined to the song itself. In the remarkable ending, one can see the motivic relationship which makes of the entire cycle a huge *Bogenform*—the γ - β transformation, which is an exact reflection of the β - γ transformation in mm. 14-15 of the first song.

Thus the *motivicity* of the *Altenberg Lieder* is the cycle's most powerfully cohesive structural force. It shows Berg's rapid advance from the lesser but still substantial motivic technique of the Opus 3 Quartet. Even in the huge *Altenberg Lieder*, however, the density of motives seems small compared with the Three Pieces for Orchestra, Opus 6, whose almost preposterously intricate motivic substance has

never been fully probed. Yet even such few of Berg's constructive powers as have been illuminated in recent years caused Stravinsky to suggest that Berg is "the most gifted constructor in form of the composers of this century."¹⁴

One hopes the foregoing analysis will be useful to those interested in seeing how closely related were the parallel evolutions of Schoenberg and Berg during the "contextual" years, before Schoenberg invented the twelve-tone method and Berg adopted it. Further studies, of course, are needed, particularly of Berg's Three Pieces for Orchestra and of Schoenberg's as yet unpublished *Jakobsleiter*. Certain portions of the passacaglia in *Wozzeck* (Act I, Scene 4) come so remarkably close to Schoenberg's invention that one almost wonders why Berg did not stumble on the idea himself; the *Altenberg Lieder* have now yielded some secrets about what led up to Berg's own variety of predodecaphonic serialism.

Postscript

Space precludes any discussion here of the second,¹⁵ third, and fourth songs. The reader will be able, however, to approach them in fair depth on his own, since the PV scores are in the main complete (except for the omnipresent and striking subtleties of Berg's scoring, which could be the subject of many pages). A few brief notes should be given here:

Song 2. The third beat of the left hand in m. 6 would be more accurately rendered as shown in Ex. 41, which shows how α makes its appearance in this song.



Ex. 41

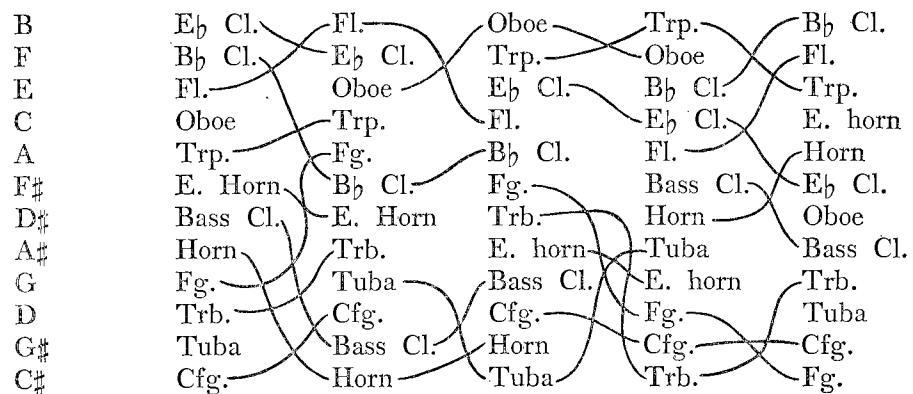
Song 3. The *Klangfarben* chord at the beginning of this piece has been referred to by several writers. Here is a list of the successive scorings of the chord for the benefit of those who may not see the full score for many years. (Lines indicate phrasings.)

¹⁴ Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Conversations with Igor Stravinsky*, Garden City, New York, 1959, p. 79.

¹⁵ A brief but good analysis of the second song is given in Rolf Urs Ringger, "Zur formbildenden Kraft des vertonten Wortes," *Schweizerische Musikzeitung* 99: 225-229 (1959).

PERSPECTIVES OF NEW MUSIC

PITCHES: INSTRUMENTS:



Song 4. Measure 26, last two beats of the right hand should read thus:



Ex. 42