

# An Analysis of Anton Von Webern's Concerto for Nine Instruments

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Anton Webern's (1883-1945) largest project of the early the 1930s, the Concerto for Nine (solo) Instrument's Op. 24, is for flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, trumpet, trombone, violin, viola, and piano. This serial work's analysis became almost as famous as the concerto itself. Highly economical, short, concentrated and free relationship between the intervals take over from tonality as the main organizational principle "pontillistic" style. The clear and transparent frame "*Klangfarbenmelodie*", is a row, that was distributed among different instruments. So that, several notes can be heard in the same timbre. Like most of Webern works, there are quiet special effects like a whisper, string harmonics, pizzicato, muting, and athematic intevalic cells as the basic structural element. Concerto for Nine Instruments has succeeding series of twelve-tone works. Webern worked for a long time on the Concerto's raw, trying to arrive at an equivalent to the Latin word-square palindrome which reads the same left to right from the top, right to left from the bottom, downwards from the top left, or upwards from the bottom right.

S A T O R

A R E P O

T E N E T

O P E R A

R O T A S

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## Introduction

Webern embraced the strictest kind of twelve-tone procedure and fully incorporated this into his own esthetic (Salzman, 1988). Webern's row is extremely economical. Every three-note segment of Webern's concerto is a contrapuntal derivative (transposed) of the pitches G, B, and B-flat. Each three-note group is a retrograde, inversion, or retrograde inversion of each of the other trichords. The row is constructing certain transpositions yield trichords with the same pitch-class content. The work's trichord-based row and a rhythmic figure to view it is an anticipation of total serialism. Its minimalist play of trichords might indicate a high level of abstraction and suggest the possibility of a parallel and equally programmatic reading. His principle "maximization of the minimalization" is limited collection of pitches, registers, colors, rhythms, accents, and articulations in its greatest possible variety. The basic intervallic units are mentioned as Major third and minor second. Certain group of pitches aspects the relationship with the twelve-tone pitch material and usage of retrograde and inversion techniques.

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Concerto Op. 24 was dedicated to Schoenberg on his 16th birthday. It exhibits the new probability in the instrumental music. The style of the work's period is to use wide intervals, instrumental tone, and extraordinary usage of the registers. The technique Webern used in this piece is based on series relationships, planning systematic analysis of row forms.

### Second Movement

The slow second movement (2/4) of Webern's Concerto Op. 24 was written in an obvious serial texture. This movement forms a meditative (B) section between the first and third movements (A's). For all its quietness and reserve this movement is one of the most extreme and single minded of Webern's serial pieces. There is a pattern that recalls the falling and rising thirds with the opening parts of the second movement. The rhythmic structure is the same but the tempo has changeable difference. The main trichord (0 14) is dominating to all the measures one by one. Sometimes it comes vertically in one measure, sometimes it spreads more than one measure in a linear, or diagonal way of using. In a twelve-note row for the first four bars, it starts with P7 (as G, B, Bb). In the next four bars come I11 (as B, C, G#/A b) and the very next four bars introduces P3 using the notes Eb, G, and F#. For the first four bars, the combinations of R, I, and RI, based on the trichords, are also used vertically one by one. For example, the first D, D#, and F# trichord of the second are the RI6 of the first diagonal G, B and Bb and Bb trichord in the first two measures. The E, F, and C# notes in the second and third measures are R1 and C, Ab, and A in the fourth measure is I0. These are all derived trichords from each other and comprise the twelve-tone row in the first four bars. It consists of a three-note row followed by its RI, R, and I with each of these note-cells transposed at higher or lower pitch levels.

The row of the first movement:

**P0 > P:** B-Bb-D **RI:** Eb-G-F# **R:** G#-E-F **I:** C-C#-A

Second movement, Measures 1-4:

**R10 >** G-B-Bb D#D-F# E-F-Db C-Ab-A

Measures 4-7:

**RI10 >** B-G-Ab Eb-E-C- D-Db-F F#-Bb-A

Measures 7-10:

**R6 >** Eb-B-C G-G#-D C-C#-A G#-E-F

Measures 10-12:

**I5 >** E-C-Db Ab-A-F G-F#Bb B-Eb-D

Measures 13-15:

**R7 >** E-C-C# Ab-C-Bb F-F#-Bb A-B-D

They also fit with a single twelve-note unit. For example, second trichord of the twelve-note row is a transposed RI of the first trichord. These trichords assemble into a single melodic line over the piano's accompaniment, with the component notes of the melody parceled out among different instruments. The four-pitch class sets in the second movement are all transpositionally equivalent as D#-E-G, D-D#-F#, B-C-Eb, and Ab-A-C. This is clear when they are written in normal form. For example, the D# in the first set has the same position with the D note in the second set and the B note in the third set has the same position with the Ab in the fourth. Then, these are the same for the other notes of the four trichords. The spaces between two pitches (unordered pitch class intervals) give the similar sounds. Each notes in the first twelve-tone fragment moves up eight semitones that we called T8 to the second row. G goes to Eb, D goes to B, and E goes to C. This makes

all trichords derived from each other. The series that are closely related by transposition and inversion are the members of the same set class. The four trichords of the twelve-tone row are all 0 1 4 as prime form and they are overlapping as vertical, linear, and diagonal. The second vertical trichord (D, D#, F#) is RI6 of the first diagonal chord (G, B, B#). Third one is R1 (E, F, C#) vertically. The fourth vertical one (C, Ab, A) is IO. These derived series are in an extraordinary motivic unity.

Thus, in the first nine measures, all four-group trichords are in a three twelve-note row and they are members of the same set class. Every time the series comes, four statements of set classes are heard. The structure develops both note-to-note, trichord to trichord and also series to series. Series (see Figure 1) influence can also be seen in the instrumentation. For example, the two notes of viola in measure two, is silent until measure 13 play two more notes. It creates 0 14 again with repeated E note. The registers are also influenced by the series. Another example, the highest notes of measures two, four and six are D# in viola part, B in violin and D in flute part which create another 0 14.

Figure 1. Second movement, measures 1-18.



In the second page, bar 19 (see Figure 2), another twelve-tone row starts with R1 and then the next trichords goes on with P8 and R7. The linear ones that are overlapped are generally retrograde of them.

After bar 29, in the opening measures, horn, trumpet, and trombones are muting and then similar pitch equivalence starts between the remaining instruments. Webern uses the “morendo” direction, which means “dying”, rarely at the end of the second movement.

In the second movement, in general, the groups of three are formed by single tones in the melodic instruments complemented by two-note harmonic groupings in the piano. The solo line consists of the initial note of each three-note group of the row, which themselves form other transpositions of the identical three-note group. The interlocking of these groupings is carried out systematically. Transpositions of these materials are chosen which produce further relations and identities. Certain pitches and groups of two and three-notes reappear in different forms and transpositions of the row material, and these relationships are exploited in terms of register, tone color, position in the phrase and non-pitched aspects of the music are brought into close relationships with the twelve-tone pitch material (Salzman, 1988).

Figure 2. Measures 19-39.

If considering three different parts of the second movement, it is possible to separate the first part until the end of measure 28, second part ends in 56 and the recapitulation lasts from the measure 57 to the end of the movement (see Figure 3). As it is already known, A part starts with P7, B with P4 and next A with P7 again. The second trichord of the B is RI3 and A's is RI6.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for measures 40-59 of Anton von Webern's Concerto for Nine Instruments. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system covers measures 40 to 56, and the second system covers measures 50 to 59. The instruments listed on the left are Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Horn (Hr.), Trumpet (Trp.), Trombone (Br.), and Piano (Klav.). The score is heavily annotated with green highlights, circles around notes, and handwritten notes. Key annotations include 'calando sehr getragen tempo' at the top, 'mit Dmpf.' (with damping) and 'ohne Dmpf.' (without damping) for dynamic markings, and 'A P7' and 'B P4' for structural analysis. Measure numbers 40, 50, and 57 are clearly marked. The score shows complex rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings like p, pp, f, and mp.

Figure 3. Measures 40-59.



In the last five bars of the second movement P7 row in the beginning comes again but in different instrumentation (see Figure 4). The starter G note is heard by trumpet again but the next coming notes are heard as changed and all trichords come in diagonal way instead of vertical and linear as it is in the beginning.

Figure 4. Measures 60-78.

### Third Movement

The third movement 6/8 (2x3/8), compresses the three note groups into impacted units, charged along with impetuosity. It amounts to the most striking musical sound object than Webern had yet composed. This movement was formed from 0 1 4 trichords like both two movements before. It's heard as more pointillist but at the same time more flowing than the other movements. Its central "still point" as a sonority of one of each ensemble with same structural function. There are lots of silent parts between the instrumentation again that separates the set classes from each other maybe. It seems more linear as a general movement than the second one. There are also some parts that change the instruments again but not lots of rhythmic variation. The end of the third movement evidenced a new fluency and facility. It is characterized by a new lyrical directness, rooted in a particularly simple use of serial technique.

In the last movement, the first four trichords are following the same row of the second movement as prime form, retrograde-inversion, retrograde and inversion but in different transpositions of course as P5, RI10, R11 and I4 linearly as they are shown below.

Third movement, measures 1-4 (see Figure 5): (derived series of 0 14 trichord)

<u>3-3</u>	<u>3-3</u>	<u>3-3</u>	<u>3-3</u>
F-F#-D	C#-A-Bb	Ab-C-B	E-Eb-G
P5 +1 -4	R10 -4 +1	R11 +4 -1	I4 -1 +4

Measures 4-8:

**I4:** F#-Bb-A **RI5:** D-C#-F **P3:** Eb-E-C **R8:** B-G-Ab

Figure 5. Third movement, measures 1-6.

Measures 8-11:

**I9:** A-G#-G **RI8:** F-E-G# **P6:** F#-G-Eb **R11:** D-Bb-B

Measures 11-13:

**R9:** C-G#-A **P4:** E-F-Db **RI6:** Eb-D-F# **I10:** G-B-Bb

The next four of them appear in the same way but in different row as I4, RI5, P3, and R8. In bars 14-15 and 16-17, there are 0 12 and 0 15 chords only to be a mediator to create the main 0 14 trichords both linear and vertical way. Trichords can sometimes be followed just linear for every different instrument, sometimes both linear and vertical, also using diagonal and horizontal way rarely. It is mentioned more chordal through the finish.

It can be seen almost the transpositions of P, R, RI, or I's of trichord in the analysis (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Measures 7-20.



In bar 28 (see Figure 7), the first three trichords are the same as with the beginning P5, R110, and R11. So it may be seen as an early recapitulation.

Figure 7. Measures 21-33.

The vertical RI2 trichord in bar 43 (see Figure 8) is exactly the same as the one in measure 58. Actually after these measures, it is obvious that a general repetitive section starts on all of the trichords especially in the piano part obviously. Another example of this thesis is the starter trichord of the second movement G, B, and Bb is in bars 45 and 56 linearly and also in bar 48 vertically.

Figure 8. Measures 34-46.



In measure 58 (see Figure 9), it starts a new repetitive section that includes four different trichords equal to a twelve-tone row in the piano part vertically and also linearly in all the other instruments until the end of the movement as it is shown below.

**RI2:** B-Bb-D **P6:** F#-G-Eb **RI8:** F-E-G# **I0:** A-C#-C

Figure 9. Measures 47-58.

At the end of the third movement (see Figure 10), last 0 1 4 trichord is R5. If it is considered the first 0 1 4 trichord of this movements was P5. Thus, the main common note F starts with prime form and ends of its retrograde.

Figure 10. Measures 59-70.

### Conclusion

Webern's Concerto for Nine Instruments's Op. 24 is analyzed as a total serial work of twelve-tone system. It is seen that the minor and major intervals used as the main principle of its style. The special effects are the structural elements of the instruments. The concertos derived rows were completed as a matrix. The main achievement of this paper was analyzing the row's three-note segments of the pitches and cross-checking measure by measure. In this way, the usage of the series can be seen both horizontally and vertically in the partition.

As a conclusion, Webern's Concerto for Nine Instruments Op. 24's all three movements are successfully derived from each other. How Webern composes is a big factor for this kind of composition, which constitutes derived series in twelve-tone system.

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