

HKDSE Music – Listening (Form 4)

Expressionism and Serialism

Expressionism

- an artistic movement in Germany from 1905 to 1925 that aspired to represent inner (often dark and unpleasant) thoughts, experiences, feelings and emotions, such as inner conflicts, tension, anxiety, fear, anguish, and despair
- Characteristics of expressionist music
 1. use of extreme chromaticism and harsh dissonances
 2. distorted and fragmented melodies
 3. use of texts that depict topics such as violence, perversion, and murder
 4. unpredictable music with a wide range of emotive states

Atonality

- no sense of a tonic note, tonic chord, or key
- Atonal music avoids any key or mode by making free use of the notes of the chromatic scale – considering all twelve notes to be of equal importance.
- The boundary between consonance and dissonance becomes non-existent.
- The first composer to explore the possibilities of atonality was **Arnold Schoenberg**.
- Notable works of atonality by Schonberg:
 1. Schoenberg's Second String Quartet, final movement (1908)
 2. Schoenberg's Three Piano Pieces, Op. 11 (1909)
 3. Schonberg's *Pierrot lunaire* (1912)

The Second Viennese School

- consists of three composers in the early 20th century:
 1. **Arnold Schoenberg** (1874–1951)
 2. **Alban Berg** (1885–1935)
 3. **Anton Webern** (1883–1945)
- the name draws a parallel to the first Viennese school – Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven

Speaking voice (*Sprechstimme*) / Speech-song (*Sprechgesang*)

- a means of declamation somewhere between speech and singing

- instead of sustaining a pitch as in the conventional method of singing, however, the performer allows the pitch to drop rather in the same way one's voice drops with the enunciation of a spoken word

Tone-color melody (*Klangfarbenmelodie*)

- a melody made up of a succession of different tone colors by distributing the pitches among different instruments

Serialism (Twelve-tone system / Dodecaphony)

- a compositional method based on the systematic ordering of twelve chromatic notes into a tone row (or series)
- developed by Arnold Schoenberg in the early 1920s
- there are four different operations on the tone row:
 1. **prime:** the original order
 2. **retrograde:** the row in reverse order
 3. **inversion:** the row turned upside-down
 4. **retrograde inversion:** the row in reverse order and turned upside-down