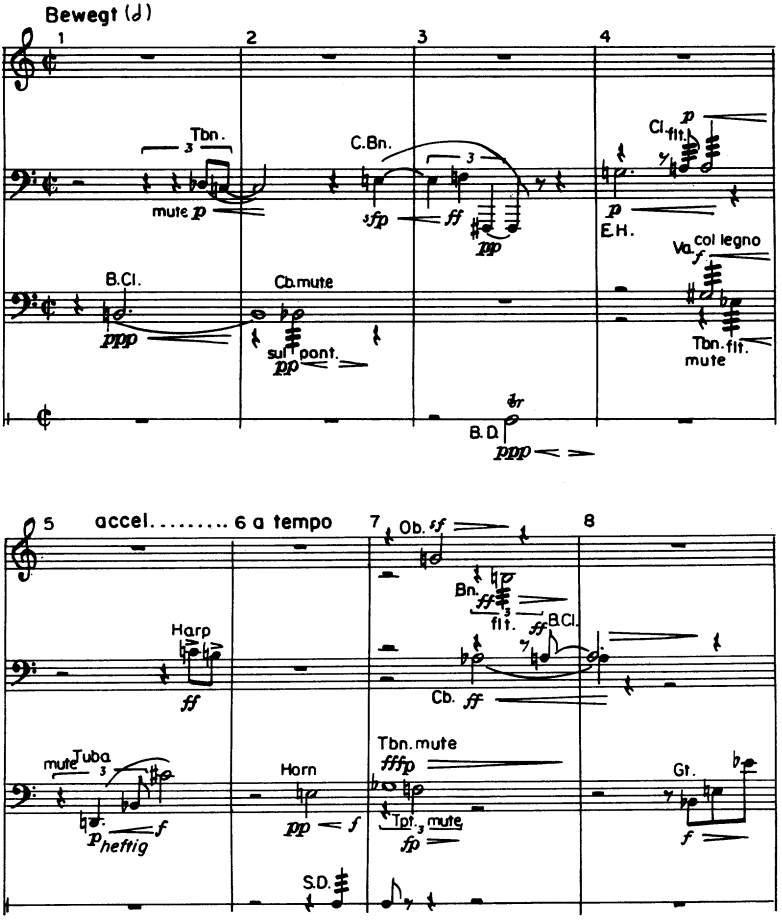

From ORCHESTRAL PIECES (1913), Movement I ("Bewegt"), by Anton von Webern.
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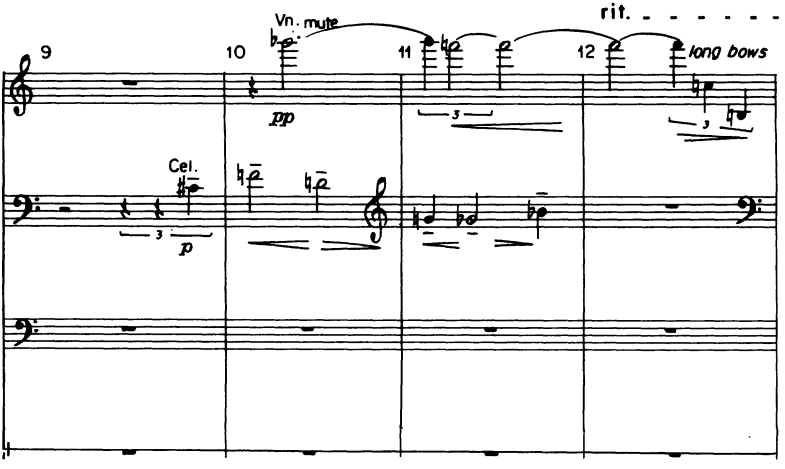
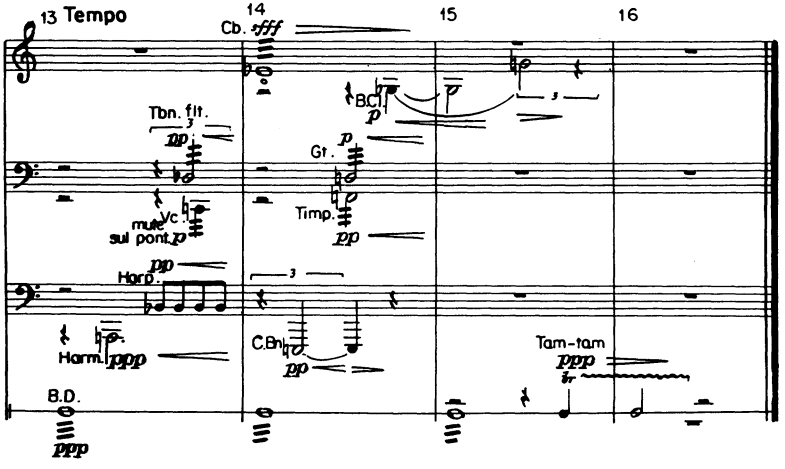

9
10
11
12
Vn. mute
pp
rit.
long bows
Cel.
p


13 Tempo
14
15
16
Cb.
fff
Tbn. flt.
pp
Vc.
mute
sul pont.
p
Harp.
pp
Harm.
ppp
B.D.
ppp
BCl.
p
Gt.
p
Timp.
pp
C.Bn.
pp
Tam-tam
ppp

6

ANALYSIS

SYMPOSIUM

ROY TRAVIS

At one point in Samuel Beckett's MALONE DIES, Malone complains that all his life he tried to "live and invent," while within him "the wild beast of earnestness padded up and down, roaring, ravening, rending." One feels a bit like that trying to make sense of Webern's aphoristic orchestral piece. One must be on guard against the "wild beast of earnestness." An attitude of speculative play is necessary, because complexity and ambiguity are essential parts of Webern's design. To try to make the musical motion explicit without recognizing that ambiguity is as false as to pretend that there is no musical motion because of the ambiguity (or that there is no

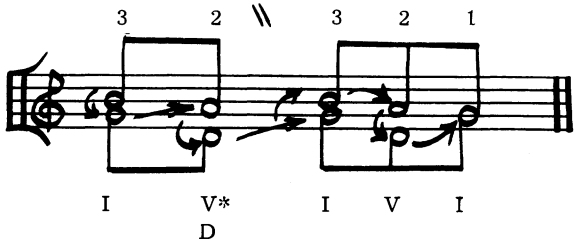
From the few shreds and snippets of evidence it is barely possible to infer the following tonal structure. However, the style is so terse that this structure is not established unequivocally. In spite of the overlapping timbres, what emerges is not an explicit polyphony, but a line – a Klangfarbenmelodie – which has polyphonic implications to be sure, but for lack of sufficient evidence, these remain susceptible to a variety of interpretations.

My own response to this aural Rorschach test is detailed in the following sketches. Like most such tests, it probably reveals more about the patient than the inkblot.

8

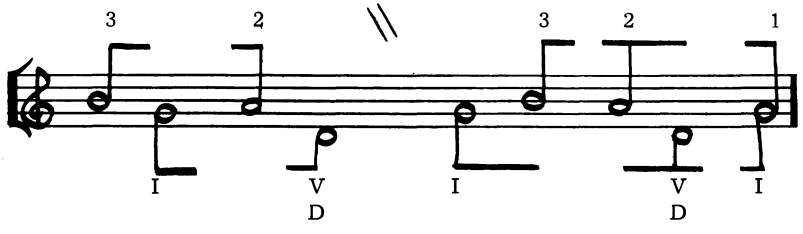
EXAMPLE

1 Implied Two-Voice Structure: Interruption Technique



* Divider Dominant: see Felix Salzer, STRUCTURAL HEARING, Volume I, p. 145

2 Structure Realized by a Single Performing Voice



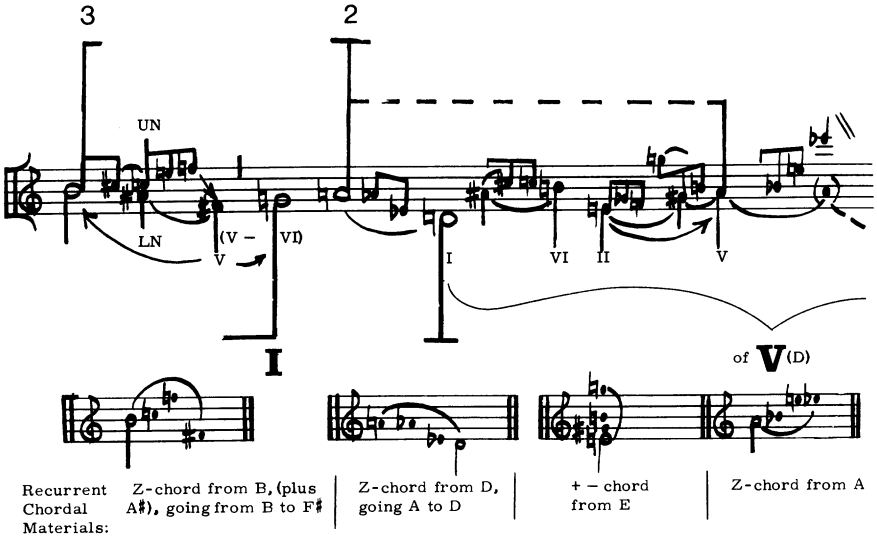
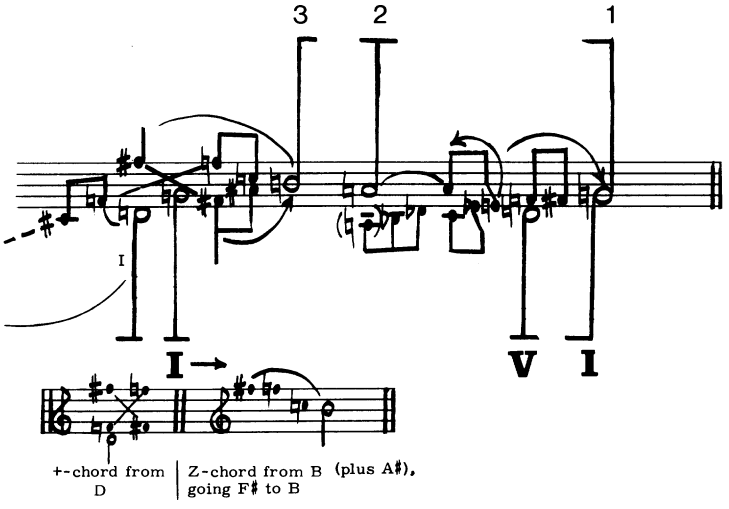
EXAMPLE

3

10

EXAMPLE

4 STRUCTURE AND DETAILED PROLONGATIONS



(EXAMPLE 4 Continued: Structure and Detailed Prolongations)