

HKDSE Music – Listening (Form 6)

Week 4 Revision – Twentieth Century Music

Musical characteristics

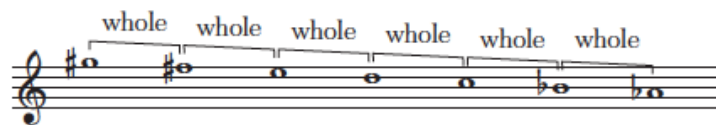
- Harmony
 - use of **non-functional** harmonies
 - **atonality**: without any sense of a key or centrality
 - **polytonality**: music that implies two or more tonal centers
 - use of non-diatonic scales – **church modes, pentatonic scale, whole-tone scale**
 - extreme **dissonances** / **discords** / **tone clusters**
- Melody
 - less predictable, often **fragmentary**
 - include **wide leaps**, often with chromatic and dissonant intervals
 - may include **glissando** between notes
 - **irregular** phrase structure
- Meter and rhythm
 - **irregular meter**: quintuple meter (5/4) or septuple meter (7/4), additive meter (3+3+2)
 - **frequent change of meter**
 - **polyrhythm**: superimposition of two or more different rhythmic patterns
 - **syncopation**: an accent falling on the off-beat (or weak beat) of a bar
 - **ostinato**: continuous recurrence of a fixed rhythmic pattern
- Texture
 - can vary greatly between homophonic to polyphonic texture
 - complex texture with superimposition of multiple instrumental layers
- Genres and forms
 - more diversified, free form
- Instrumentation
 - exploration of **new timbres**
 - use of **extreme registers** and wide dynamic range
 - use of **extended techniques** (such as sul ponticello, sul tasto, col legno) for instruments and voices
 - inclusion of **new instruments** into the orchestra, such as saxophone, celesta, and piano
 - a renewed interest in **percussion** instruments
 - unconventional combination of instruments

Impressionism – Debussy & Ravel

- Form
 - **free form**, through-composed
- Harmony
 - use of **extended harmonies** such as the ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth chords
 - drawing occasionally on **non-diatonic scales** such as the **whole tone** and **pentatonic**, creating sounds evocative of East Asia
- Voice leading
 - abandonment of traditional rules of voice leading
 - **parallel** fourths, fifths, and octaves; **parallel** triads and seventh chords
- Rhythm: fluid, flexible and free-flowing (often avoiding any definite sense of meter)
- Timbre: lush and colourful orchestrations; lyrical, intimate, delicate and sensuous

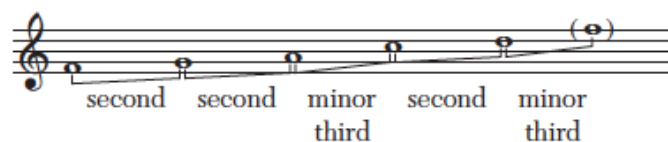
Whole-tone scale

- a scale made up of six pitches separated by a whole tone
- used to create a floating tonality (devoid of any major or minor triad)
- only two whole-tone scales exist: including C or C#



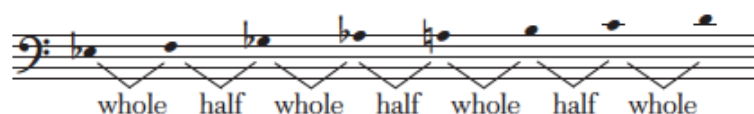
Pentatonic Scale

- a scale made up of five pitches from the major scale (scale degrees 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6)
- the scale does not have any semitone or tritone, thus having a more consonant sound
- different pentatonic scales can be built on each of the twelve pitches



Octatonic Scale

- a scale made up of eight pitches with alternating semitone and whole tone



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

The Second Viennese School

- consists of three composers in the early 20th century: **Arnold Schoenberg** (1874–1951), together with his students **Alban Berg** (1885–1935) and **Anton Webern** (1883–1945)

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

Neoclassicism – Stravinsky (middle period), Prokofiev & Hindemith

- make use of **diatonic modes** but search for new ways to establish a single pitch as a tonal center
- use of **conventional genres** (suite, sonata, concerto, and concerto grosso) and musical forms (ritornello principle, sonata form, rondo, and theme and variations)
- transparent texture, lighter orchestration (requires a smaller ensemble)

Ostinato

- a (rhythmic or melodic) figure that repeats in succession without alteration

Polychord

- a combination of two or more chords at the same time
- the chord is thereby bitonal or polytonal



Quartal harmony (fourth chord)

- a chord in which the tones are a fourth apart



Quintal harmony (fifth chord)

- a chord in which the tones are a fifth apart

Tone cluster

- a chord made up of tones only a semitone or a whole tone apart

