

Title: Young People's Concerts Scripts: What is a Melody? [pencil on yellow legal pad paper with emendations in red pencil]

Name(s): Bernstein, Leonard 1918-1990

Resource Type: text

Note(s): From: Young People's Concerts Television Scripts Series

Subject(s): Melody
Themes
Motives
Tunes
Development
Repetition
1-2-3 design
Beethoven: Symphony No. 5
Wagner, Richard
Wagner: Tristan and Isolde
Phrases
Counterpoint
Mozart: Symphony in G-Minor
Bach: Italian Concerto
Hindemith: Concert Music for Strings and Brass
Brahms: Symphony No. 4

URL <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/ahas/loc.natlib.lbypc.0231>

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pg.



Last ~~was~~ Thursday evening I attempted to explain to The Old-Fellows just why we had reverted to white tie & tails for those Preview Concerts, & abandoned our experimental uniforms. ~~Some~~ ^{Even Stephen} Some of you may have been here then, & others of you may have read about it in the press; so I won't go over it all again. But there is one point I omitted last time, which has caused no end of letters and ~~comments~~ ^{raised eyebrows}. As one donor to The Philharmonic put it: "Why should I contribute substantial sums to the Philh. Society, when ^{the money} gets spent on silly uniforms that are as easily discarded as they are invented?" I shall ~~discontinue~~ let me clear up this point, quickly, ^{for all time} The uniforms were not paid for by The Philharmonic at all; ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~paid~~ ^{paid} for by The Philharmonic; ~~but~~ they were simply an item in the television budget, since originally they were to be worn on our current series of TV shows, ^{which is sponsored by Lincoln Center.} & when it turned out that ^{the uniforms} ~~they~~ were not suitable for televising, that they didn't hit it off with the camera, ~~they were~~ ^{simply} to say nothing of ~~the~~ ^{half} the Carnegie Hall audience — they were simply put aside. As of this moment, their future is unknown. We might donate them to the Salvation Army, if ~~we~~ we can find 100-odd Salvation Army people who come up to the measurements of this assembly here. In any case, the important thing is for you donors & contributors not to be alarmed, not to discontinue your donations, but perhaps ~~some~~ even to double them. And now to music.

Thurs Eve
Preview
5 7th '59

No. 9

Last week we inaugurated a new period in our survey of Am. music - a period of about 15 years, from the great Crash of '29 through the 2nd World War. During this time, we discovered, Americans were undergoing a great upheaval of depression and politico-cultural awareness; we were developing a new social conscience. And we find these qualities faithfully mirrored in the music of the period - music that shows a new sobriety, after all the hectic extravagance of the twenties; and a new desire to be understood by large audiences, ~~not just~~ to communicate with a larger mass than just the musical élite, or the fringes of the avant-garde. The lyricism of the Barber cello concerto that we heard last Thursday, and the spontaneous, ~~for~~ engaging simplicity of the charming symphony ^{by} Randall Thompson that we heard on Sunday are both signs of the times.

Now this week we come to ~~another~~ ^{yet another} phenomenon of this era: patriotic fever. This was of course inevitable, seeing how things were going. Not only were we becoming socially more aware, more conscious of our own country as our own personal problem - but we were becoming increasingly apprehensive about the ~~rise~~ ^{startling} rise to power of Adolf Hitler, of Mussolini, of Fascism, persecutions, wars of nerves, ~~decisions like Munich~~ mutual defence pacts, Munich, China, Spain, Finland, ^{all} and the rest of the grim story. We began to take sides, violently; the world suddenly seemed divided

(2)

into two camps, for and against freedom.

In the midst of all this, there began pouring out of the Soviet Union ~~a~~ rivers of new music; important music, symphonic works of a surprising stature and accessibility. That was the key word, accessibility; it meant that new works could be written, in a generally modern idiom, that could still appeal emotionally and intellectually to vast numbers of people. And of course that fitted neatly into an American pattern: that was just what ^{our composers} ~~were~~ ~~needed~~ were aiming for as well. Only nobody was insisting on it here; nobody was commanding our composers to write music for the masses — although perhaps sheer economic necessity had something to do with it. After all, our composers have to live on something; + they also want to be heard, and their message received + appreciated. But in the Soviet Union a composer was constantly under the hot white light of government inspection; he was subject to the whims of Stalin, the dogmas of the Communist party, the criticism of absolutely non-musical critics. The great phibboleth was "decadent bourgeois formalism": that was to be avoided at all costs. ~~What did they mean by that?~~ → Russian music had to have, above all, "socialist realism". What is these slogans mean? How can F#'s + B♭'s have socialist realism? And what is

(3)

"decadent bourgeois formalism," except what they chose to think of as modernism? This ruled out Stravinsky, of course, the greatest Russian ^{master} ~~composer~~ of all time; to say nothing of such bourgeois formalists as Schoenberg, Webern, Berg, Bartok, Hindemith — practically the whole history of 20th century music. Above all, a good Soviet composer must not sound like any of them. He must sound as much as possible like his Russian forbears, retaining that odd mixture of academicism and popular nationalism that had stamped the works of Rimsky-Korsakov & Tchaikovsky. And as for Socialist Realism — what does that mean except patriotic fervor, ranging all the way from lofty ideals to low jingoism, from Odes to Stalin all the way to Sabre dances that ~~could~~ ~~not~~ be played in factories to speed up the ~~the~~ workers' rate of production?

And yet, out of this mish-mash of political tyranny over the 12 notes of the scale, came pieces of real majesty and beauty, like The 5th Symphony of Shostakovich we shall hear tonight. It contains a certain inevitable amount of banality, of course, of padding and Russian clichés. But it has also a force and a sincerity and a pouring, bristling excitement that is electrifying. It also ~~contains~~ contains one of the truly great Adagios of our time, I believe, ♪

(4)

~~a slow movement - good music~~

It is really too early to measure the influence of such composers as Shostakovich and Prokofiev on ~~an~~ ~~any~~ world music; but we already know that it was enormous. ~~It pointed~~ They pointed away for other composers to follow; and in England, France, & especially in America, their influence coincided ^{next to} with the tenor of the times, the basic ~~feeling~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~artistic~~ mood, which ~~was~~ ~~born~~ had been born of anti-fascist feelings. We suddenly had to craft freedom pieces: a Lincoln Portrait by Copland, settings of Walt Whitman by almost everybody, including Schuman and Sello Jovic, a Testament of Freedom by Randall Thompson, and so on. In their company stands Roy Harris, with work after work attesting to this theme, whether by title, a dedication, or through the music itself.

The work we are about to hear is ^{as} ^{as it can be} very different from Shostakovich, even though it springs from the same patriotic, serious, social ~~and~~ & cultural sources. It is as contrapuntal as Shost. is monophonic: that is, where Shost. is primarily concerned with a tune and its accompaniment, Harris is mainly interested in the simultaneity of melodies, the ~~sub~~weavings of counterpoint. He has a theory about this: that counterpoint has acquired a

5

reputation of being erudite and difficult; but that this is wrong; counterpoint, he says, springs from the people, and is an essence of the folk-art. However true that may be, Harris has somehow managed to combine counterpoint with the non-erudite, highly accessible and pleasant kind of music in a way that is distinctly his own. The Harris personality is so strong that you can't miss it in any of his pieces; you could recognize the Harris sound in the middle of the Sahara at midnight. And he has so codified his personal style that it amounts almost to a system, which makes it easy for others to imitate him. But the others don't have that ringing conviction that makes Harris Harris.

The system is nothing so complex as the Schoenberg system, or even the Hindemith theories. It is designed to allow melodic lines to travel together in comfort - that is, with a minimum of dissonance - resulting in an effect of triadic harmony, basically no different from the harmony of Schubert. And yet, how different it is! Let me give you one or two ^{short} examples. Part II, "Free to Build" begins with a noble statement in the solo Horn, which could conceivably have been written by any old-fashioned composer. [Horn solo]

⑥

Now This is followed ~~by~~ by a series of imitations, in the tuba, The woodwinds, The trumpets, and soon, which build line upon line of sounds, each in a different key. For instance, The tuba replies in this key:

[Tuba solo]

Then the winds, in this key:

[Fl + Cl]

Then a trumpet, in this key:

[Tpt.]

And as it goes on, all these lines begin to merge together, overlapping, weaving in and out of one another; and the result, amazingly enough, is a texture of harmony that proceeds without one dissonance, in spite of the fact that each line is in a different tonality. It's a remarkable system, indeed. Here is that whole introductory passage; & see if you can feel that tension building up without any dissonant procedures.

[Tutti to 4 before ④]

A wonderful passage, isn't it? And here is another example of the Harris style, showing how possible it still is, in our century, to use the notes & devices of the past, and make a new sound out of them. The strings are playing a canon, which, as you know, is an imitation device like 3 blind mice. And notice how absolutely free it is of any dissonance.

(7)

^{Part I,}
[Str: 4 before (14) to 1 before (15)]

And over that strong, singing canon you will hear golden chords in the brass, that could be by Brahms:

[Br: bars 3+4 before (14)]

In addition, there are ~~some~~^{dynamic} figures in the flutes, again purely consonant:

[Fl: bars 3 + 4 before (14)]

Now all this together produces a wonderful sound, that could never be by Brahms, or anyone else except Harris — & not a dissonance in it.

[Tutti: 4 before (14) to 1 before (15)].

Strong, singing, noble. And over it all...

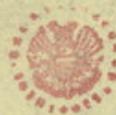
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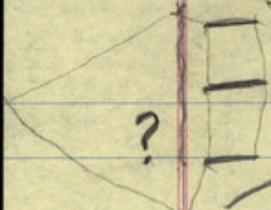
⑧

And one, it all flies the banner of freedom,
of America as pioneer, as dreamer, builder,
defender of the faith — all designed to reach
a mass audience ^{of equally intelligent Americans.} Harris has called it a
study in consonance; which means that you will
now hear a thoroughly modern work, incontrovertibly
of the 20th century, in which there is ~~almost~~
hardly one dissonance. And that in itself
is no small accomplishment.



Leonard Bernstein
4/7/65




~~Brahms 4-chaconne
 Hindy Konstantinik - Part I.
 Chai Copie D'ata~~



Prok #5
 Francesca (cl. solo)
 Mozart Gm. (bit)
 Mendelssohn Vln Conc (bit)
 Sacre (motives)
 ?? Connotations
 Chai 4 (cl. solo)
 ? Schubert song (piano)

Tristan Prelude (complete?)
 Mozart Gm. 1st mov't
 Hindy, Pt I
 Brahms 4
 (Quar'inae) Strauss waltz - Danke an Kaiser.

Melody → Not necessarily a tune
(You go out whistling)
(Beethoven 2nd)

Variations
Copland
Brahms

Metaphors
Schumann - long line
Franzetta " "
Bach It. Conc " "
Ravel Bolero " "

Long line non-repeat

What is usually thought of as not melodic?

Thematic procedures (Wagner, Strauss)
Scriabin (nocturne) (Strauss, Ballo)
Long line
Modern music
Counterpoint (Bach, Prokofiev - look, sing?)
Jazz - (Monty Alexander)
Pep music

12-tone (Copland, Varèse)
Angular (taxi taxi)
Noisy - neo-primitive

So are... But Beethoven?
Jazz (long line improv) (Aminu, most melodic)
Pop music - good + bad
7's kind

"Night & Day" (But show notes displaced by octaves)

"Tune" - strong head ("first strain") based on repetition
varied " sequences
Usually in order symmetry
AAB "Stollen + Abgesang"
(like 1-2-3! in starting a recitative)

Beethoven 4th (Ch. 4) -
Mozart 6th symph. (5th highest usually complete in itself)
Arch
Climbing to tension + receding
Vamp intro (Mozart's 1st Conc. Prok # 5 - No. 2. 6m -
7 too long)

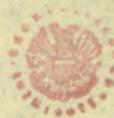
That Modern melody - (Then is it?)
Prok # 5 slow mov't (Konzertstück)
Hindemith Mathis (Or. Str. pt 3)

But time that most modern music doesn't obey the rules. So what?
It's still melody, by an definition - series of notes. Sometimes pains taken to be anti-melody - break up (Webern - Boulez) - even so, it's a kind of melody.

"Bird in the hand" Sing melodies and bird calls can be very unmelodic. (example)

It's almost impossible to have a melody. But distinguish between melody - tune - theme
Difference between good + bad melody. What is a good one? One that sticks? A bad one, one that doesn't? Non-difference between theme, tune, melody, phrase

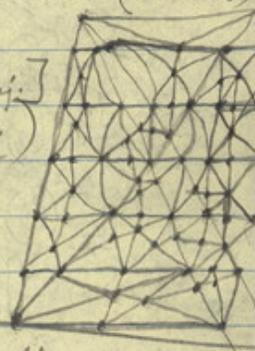
Melody YP-TV



Hurt - Konzertmusik Pt I, section 2.

Graph of melody, while playing on piano.
(Reveal? Finger painting?)

- Show element of repetition
- Arch of phrases, + of whole line.
- Building of tension, + relaxation. (cadences)
- Sequences
- Tonal center (C#) [min-maj.]
- long line (relate to Bach)
- return of 1st section (Reprise)



Copland Compositions - Non-melodic.

- explain now
- opening chords
- variations: melodies are created in spite of himself - + good ones =

Eudwitz Brahms 4 finale (non-melodic)

or

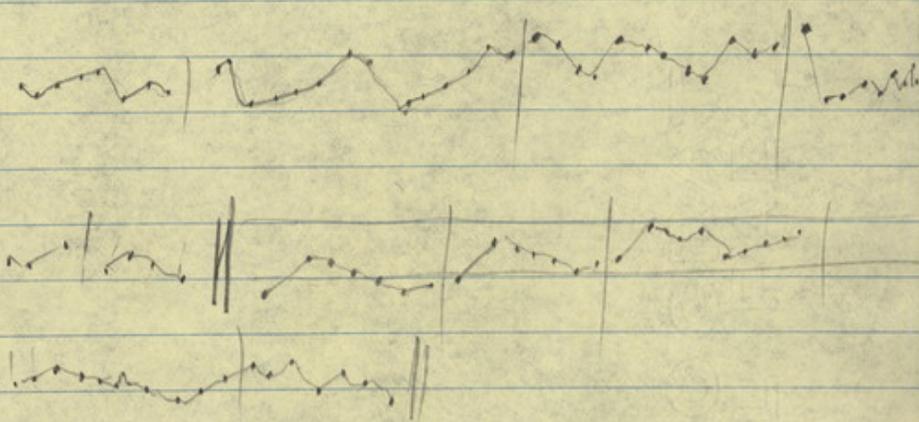
Chai - Cap. Ital. - (pure ex. of tunes)

Big time: A A B -

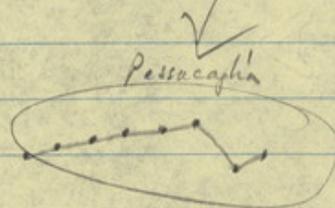
Other: A, A', B -

Prok #5. Adagio - Vamp.

Hand.
Graph



Graphs of Bach Italian Concerto, Preludes 4th



Intro: Licks of melody.

Tune. (complete, etc.)

Best first, motive. (Thm, phrase)

Thm, Theme.

Now, Tune.

Analyze.

Mozart Gm.

(afterpart.) - inner voice, bass line (Counterpoint)



- See these things inhibit sense of melody, yet are the very essence of melody: ~~the~~ principle of repetition, with variation.

intro : kinds of melody

Tune : Best fact:

Motive.

Theme.

Then tune :

Bar line

Immer voice.

(Mozart gm, or Brahms Chaconne)

The long line : (Bach, Chai)



③ — Usual meaning: Tune (good whistling)
What makes it?

Usually complete in itself - (pop song - Schubert Lie 2)

Repetition

→ similar phrases (in length & shape) — Schubert unfinished
slightly altered phrases (")

Sequences

Arch: climb & fall, tension & relaxation

Form: usually 8 bars, 16 bars, 32 bars. Exact ex.?

Explain. (var. in Chai 4)

Night & Day

She here and there slow mov^t

Bach 4th last

Frank 2nd not

Hoffman finale

all help to
make it
easy to
retain
(sticks in
your mind)

Strong front strain.

Vamp.

② — Theme: ~~shorter~~ ~~Bach 5th~~ shorter.

Sometimes used to mean tune (Theme "from Exodus")

~~motive, (Chai 4th)~~

Not complete in itself: needs development.

Subject of a discussion. (Fugue-subject)

① Motive - a few notes - interval - rhythmic figure.

See RSE. - WSS(?)

Wagner - Tristan Prelude (2 4 note motives
last note of 1st & 2nd
into 1st note of 2nd)

→ Brahms 4 and/or

Mozart Gm

