Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Neo-Classicism: The Issues Reexamined

ALAN LESSEM

TO their contemporaries, the positions taken by Schoenberg and Stravinsky had seemed opposed and irreconcilable. Allegiance to one or the other was to be decisive in shaping the musical directions of a younger generation of composers, both European and American. Yet today, these two men have become cultural monuments, and the more recent critical viewpoint is to end the quarrel. Hence it is being argued that issues which once appeared so divisive were only the fabrication of party propagandists and fellow travelers,[1] while less biased observers could not see the forest for the trees. According to Charles Rosen, today's more objective historical perspective of the two composers is that "their differences no longer seem significant."[2] What we must see as uniting them, in Donald Mitchell's words, is "the determination to extend and above all to maintain the great tradition into which they were born."[3] In particular, insofar as both composers appear to have participated in the so-called Neo-Classical movement, they should be regarded as having had similar, if not identical, aims. Yet to insist hastily on reconciliation for this reason would leave several questions unanswered: those that pertain to the origins and aims of the Neo-Classical program and those that have to do with Schoenberg's and Stravinsky's relationship to it. A reexamination of the issues may show that the differences between the two composers remain significant and that Neo-Classicism, far from serving as an agent of mediation, is useful only as a key to the understanding of such differences.

[1] See Hans Keller, "Schönberg and Stravinsky, Schönbergians and Stravinskyans," *Music Review*, XV (1954), 307–10.

[2] *Schoenberg* (London, 1976), p. 81.

[3] *The Language of Modern Music* (London, 1963), p. 163.

The stabilization of the European economy around 1924 brought with it attempts to define the guiding principles of what was described as "New Music." As expected, the emphasis was on the reconstruction of a devastated musical culture: older European traditions were to be protected from the corrosive effects of more recent events. In rebelling against the world of their fathers, the younger generation made a point of taking nineteenth-century Romanticism to task for having bred attitudes that led to the artistic confusion (as they saw it) of the prewar years, itself a symptom of the social and cultural degeneration that had made the war possible. Not surprisingly, the French and Italians were inclined to see such developments in the light of their nationalistic, anti-German bias. Accordingly, Alfredo Casella, one of the chief architects of Neo-Classicism, called for a "liquidation of the atonal intermezzo" and for liberation from German domination in music by way of a return to Italian instrumental music of the early eighteenth century.[4] The link between Casella's brand of cultural restoration and nascent Italian Fascism was no secret, and its call for the expression of a joyful and optimistic collective spirit was taken up by several totalitarian regimes of our era.[5] Not every "call to order," to be sure, was thus tainted by reactionary political views. What many Europeans and their American counterparts did agree upon was the need to rescue principles of lawfulness from a history that had all but destroyed them. Roger Sessions, for instance, called for a *reprise de contact*, "an experiencing anew of certain laws which had been lost from view in an increasing subjectivism. . . ."[6] Essentially, Neo-Classical polemic denied historical evolution and fell back on notions of a universal human condition, not unlike a state of nature, and one that in music had most completely been realized in the eighteenth century.

Clearly, then, Neo-Classicism had little to do with Classicism properly speaking, which has always been understood to evolve from that which historically preceded it. As Paul Valéry once suggested, Romanticism and Classicism are the names we give to two phases

[4] "Scarlattiana," *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, XI/1 (1929), 26–28.

[5] T. Wiesengrund Adorno was among several to respond to Casella and to point out the sinister political implications of his reactionary posture. See T. W. Adorno, "Atonal Intermezzo?," *Anbruch*, XI/5 (1929), 187–93. Shortly thereafter Adorno also took H. H. Stuckenschmidt to task for his naïveté in calling German musicians to embrace a life-affirming, anti-intellectual *Heiterkeit* (joyfulness). See H. H. Stuckenschmidt, "Kontroverse über die Heiterkeit," *Anbruch*, XII/1 (1930), 18–19, with Adorno's response, 19–21.

[6] "Music in Crisis," in *Schoenberg*, ed. Merle Armitage (New York, 1937), p. 19.

essential to the development of the arts, "the romantic phase being the colonization of new territory, the classic being its economic development and perfect organization."[7] It is in this light that the pre- and postwar music of Schoenberg and Stravinsky might profitably be evaluated and compared. Yet in the case of both composers the issue given most attention has been that of historical reversion. It has been said of Stravinsky, for example, that he "re-instated certain principles, as valid now as they ever were, which we associate with the eighteenth century because it best understood them,"[8] and of Schoenberg that his experiments during the 1920s were "designed to recapture the security of a vanished classicism."[9] The confusion, in Schoenberg's case, of a "classicizing" tendency (in Valéry's sense) with Neo-Classicism has only clouded the picture; as for Stravinsky, the attribution of either one or the other tendency can be misleading if it is not qualified by several other considerations.

Beginning in 1923 Schoenberg gave a good deal of time to noting down his thoughts on trends in "New Music" and his relationship to them. Finding that he does not command the position of leadership in musical matters he believes to be his due, he attributes the cause of his weakened influence to "a corrupt attitude towards the arts," evident in the way composers pander to changing fashions, Neo-Classicism included.[10] He looks for responsible concern with problems of musical form, but finds only a chattering eclecticism which elevates the potpourri to a principle of construction,[11] while the mode for stylistic imitations of Classicism's more superficial features provides further evidence for a decline in musical culture.[12] While Central Europeans (among them Krenek and Hindemith) must share the blame, the deflection of evolutionary momentum can also be explained by the growing assertiveness of other European nations with musical cultures that have not developed at the same pace as his own. An unpublished "Polemic against Casella" (probably drawn up shortly after his emigration to America in an attempt to take stock of the political and

[7] Valéry is quoted in Cecil Gray, *Predicaments* (London, 1936), p. 214.

[8] Arthur Berger, "Music for the Ballet," in *Stravinsky in the Theatre*, ed. Minna Lederman (New York, 1975), p. 41.

[9] Rosen, p. 88.

[10] "How One Becomes Lonely," in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein (London, 1975), p. 52.

[11] "Glosses on the Theories of Others," *Style and Idea*, p. 314.

[12] "New Music, Outmoded Music, Style and Idea," *Style and Idea*, p. 123.

musical situation he left behind) reprimands the Italian composer for having abandoned the progressive direction represented by atonality, in order to advocate "a return to artistic normality which has never been the norm of any time."[13] Not surprisingly, his own view is inclined to see any attempt to establish "normality" as a backward step, for the truly historical man can only go forward, using the accumulated heritage of the past and reaching for the future: "One must . . . have past epochs *'in one,'* . . . for one must continue the ideas. They have not yet been thought through to the end."[14]

While Schoenberg does not allow the larger ideological implications of Casella's Neo-Classicism (notably, its connection with Fascism) to go unremarked, the case is brought against him on the grounds of musical rather than political arguments. For Schoenberg believed, in reflecting on a composer's relationship to his musical materials, that such materials are historically determined for him; hence at any moment they will be found to embody certain tendencies which must not only be acknowledged but interpreted as demands whose fulfillment will constitute the dynamic of musical (and human) progress.[15] Thus the historically conscious composer does not attempt to restore the past or imitate its outward stylistic characteristics, but examines it for the seeds of later developments. Bach, for example, will be valued for his far-reaching chromaticism as well as for the hidden motivic resourcefulness of his counterpoint, which Schoenberg made manifest in his several Bach orchestrations. It is therefore with such "progressive" elements, rather than with Bach's contrapuntal textures and forms at large, that today's composer should be concerned. For in terms of the evolutionist argument he cannot simply ignore musical developments since Bach: in particular, the emergence of "developing variation" in Viennese Classicism, a technique which in a sense is antithetical to counterpoint.[16] Casella's irresponsibility toward history is all too clearly revealed in his way of using fugue and sonata, which is such that the two opposing principles are not mediated but

[13] Throughout this article, unpublished writings by Schoenberg are identified by their listing in Josef Rufer's *The Works of Arnold Schoenberg*, trans. Dika Newlin (London, 1962). "Polemic against Casella" is listed as C. 175. I am grateful to the Arnold Schoenberg Institute in Los Angeles for permission to use these sources.

[14] "New Music/My Music," *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute* I/2 (1977), 105.

[15] See Christian Martin Schmidt, "Über Schönbergs Geschichtsbewusstsein," in *Zwischen Tradition und Fortschritt*, ed. R. Stefan (Mainz, 1973).

[16] The argument is briefly outlined in an unpublished and untitled note described by Rufer as "Thoughts on the polyphonic style of writing," Rufer, D.18.

simply juxtaposed. In attempting to have the best of both worlds, the Neo-Classicist fails to recognize the critical nature of the contrapuntal-homophonic juncture, one with which Schoenberg is deeply concerned and to which his thoughts repeatedly return. The problem as he sees it can be stated as follows: while contrapuntal music resists motivic-thematic development, homophonic music encourages it, but in doing so is inclined to sacrifice textural balance and integration. Change in music history comes about when the one principle, taken to its apparent limit, gives way to the other, as evidently happened in the early eighteenth century. Interestingly enough, however, Schoenberg gives contradictory answers, in this case at least, to the question of historical cause: in some instances he speaks of the alternation as being determined by the realization and completion of inherent musical tendencies; in others he says that the emergence of eighteenth-century homophony was "not a natural development [i.e., the result of undisturbed historical evolution], but a man-made revolution," the result of "an aesthetic of popular complaisance."[17] Could it be that the view of an abrupt turnabout provoked by the intrusion of public taste reflects a perception of events in his own time, which also appears to him to be influenced by ideologues and the propagandists of fashion? Neo-Classicism then appears as the invader usurping the rights that should more properly be conferred upon those who travel the true historical path, namely, his own.[18]

Although contrapuntal and homophonic principles are considered antagonistic, the great masters are not prevented from striving to bring them into a fruitful relationship with one another: in this connection Schoenberg makes particular reference to Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. The genuine attempts at synthesis of his predecessors however are a far cry from Neo-Classicism's mixing of historical styles, which in reaching for a synthesis presents it only in caricature. The example that should be followed is that of Beethoven's "working-out in breadth, length, height and depth," recast in Schoenberg's own words as "the technique of filling . . . all the

[17] *Style and Idea*, pp. 115–16, 408–9.

[18] A short note drawn up in 1923 under the title "Historical Parallels" suggests technical similarities between "primitive" eighteenth-century homophony and the "New Music" of his own day. Schoenberg points, in particular, to the lack of textural integration between melody and harmony. See Rufer, D.31.

directions in which the music expands."[19] That such a tendency cannot but in turn undermine the essential aesthetic postulate of Classicism constitutes a problem to which we shall return shortly.

In deriding Stravinsky for wearing "a wig just like Papa Bach," Schoenberg failed to see that Stravinsky's Neo-Classicism bore little resemblance to that proposed by composers such as Casella or Milhaud. For while Stravinsky's Latin counterparts were calling for the restoration of their cultural traditions, the uprooted Russian composer had to witness his own being swept away, never to return. True, much of what Stravinsky has said (or allowed others to say on his behalf) seems to represent him as a leader of the Neo-Classical crusade: one recalls the appeals to authority and order, the pronouncements against a decadence brought about by nineteenth-century individualism, the attacks not only on German music but on cherished beliefs in historical progress, the calls for the liberation of music from an Expressionist aesthetic, for the restoration of autonomous musical form, for the replacement of the Romantically inflated artist by the Classically sober artisan, and the like. Nevertheless it is erroneous to attribute to Stravinsky the same traits of reactionary or nostalgic traditionalism as appeared in Neo-Classicism elsewhere. He may seem to take up the cause of cultural revival, but what is far more significant is his determination to have his status as an outsider to Europe's musical heritage serve a creative purpose. This explains his cultivation of a "special sense of the 'past,' " which Donald Mitchell rightly distinguishes from Schoenberg's "sense of 'immediate tradition.' "[20] While Mitchell discusses this attribute without taking sides, other critics have seen fit to condemn him for it. T. Wiesengrund Adorno and Ernest Ansermet, in particular, have depicted Stravinsky as the cultural intruder, taking only a spectator's role in the past, changing his point of view as he pleases, and occupying himself with only the most superficial of stylistic phenomena. What is borrowed from history is merely played with; the "styles" behave whimsically, without regard for embedded functions or for the requirements of cohesion and unity. Unable to participate in history, Stravinsky strips the musical past of its historical contents and meaning. In doing so, he becomes the advocate of mere contingency, which his invocation of authority

[19] *Thayer's Life of Beethoven*, rev. and ed. Elliot Forbes, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1964); *Style and Idea*, p. 116.

[20] Mitchell, p. 105.

requires us to accept as authentic and infallible. In short, in relation to European values, he dresses up as a defender but acts as a nihilist.[21]

This condemnation, though extreme, is not without pertinence. It at least helps to put some critical perspective on what Stravinsky has asserted about his use of the "constructive principles" of Classicism,[22] and what his principally Anglo-American admirers have claimed for his music as constituting a "re-instatement" or "renovation" of Classical form.[23] It must also be used against those who have rightly seen that Stravinsky's music cannot be evaluated by the criteria, however modified, of Classicism, but who nevertheless beg the question by claiming for his music a transformation of the Classical language so thorough that its relationship to that language is no longer of real significance.[24] As Adorno and Ansermet have pointed out, this relationship remains essential. But their view of it as perversely destructive reflects a historical bias that can no longer pass unquestioned in a world whose traditionally humanistic values have been profoundly challenged from within and without. A rounder view of the Stravinsky problem would be gained by bringing it into line with concepts and modes of feeling that we know to be characteristic of modernism, and by giving particular attention to some modernist approaches to the historical donnée. While there would be more to such an investigation than can be provided within the limits of this essay, a few pointers may be suggested.

There is a certain coherence to the following facts about Stravinsky: his "overt" use of historical forms (while that of Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern, as he has himself observed, remains "elaborately disguised"[25]); his insistence on drawing our attention to how a thing is

[21] See T. W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (New York, 1973), pp. 181–87, 204–8, and Ernest Ansermet, *Les Fondaments de la musique dans la conscience humaine*, 2 vols. (Neuchâtel, 1961), pp. 266–84, 490–96. For somewhat similar views, see also Paul Henry Lang's editorial Introduction to *Stravinsky: A New Appraisal of his Work* (New York, 1963) and Pierre Boulez, "Stravinsky and the Century: Style or Idea?," *Saturday Review*, May 29, 1971.

[22] "I attempted to build a new music on eighteenth-century classicism using the constructive principles of that classicism." *Stravinsky in Conversations with Robert Craft* (London, 1962), p. 35.

[23] Reference may be made to the following: Roger Sessions, "On Oedipus Rex," *Modern Music*, V/3 (1928), 14–15; Herbert Murrill, "Aspects of Stravinsky," *Music and Letters*, XXXII/2 (1951), 120; Arthur Berger, "Music for the Ballet," *Stravinsky in the Theatre*, p. 41; Eric Salzman, *Twentieth-Century Music: An Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, 1967), p. 46.

[24] See, in particular, Edward T. Cone, "The Uses of Convention: Stravinsky and his Models," in *Stravinsky: A New Appraisal of his Work*, p. 32.

[25] *Stravinsky in Conversation*, p. 139.

done rather than what is being said, to the formal play of elements rather than emotional nuance and interpretation; his consideration of musical resources as "objects" and his use of conventions as formulas; his inclination, in setting words, to isolate them from their ordinary semantic context and to do something similar in his harmonic constructions. Reflected in such attitudes is an aesthetic posture less characteristic of European Neo-Classicists than of the Russian Formalists, whose principal work was done in the 1920s but whose influence on literature and literary theory came to be felt in the West somewhat later. The Formalists considered art to be a means of rescuing reality from the deadening habits of conceptualization, representing it in novel and unsuspected contexts. The necessary "estrangement" of phenomena from everyday associations takes place through the formal process: a manipulation of artistic materials by means of techniques deliberately applied and devices openly exposed. Formalists showed little concern, when dealing with art, for larger socio-cultural considerations. Viktor Shklovsky, one of the movement's founders, dismissed humanistic modes of enquiry as irrelevant, for "art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important."[26] Anticipating today's New Criticism, the Formalist approach considered content only through the medium of form, for it cannot be described, or perceived, apart from its artistic embodiment.

To be sure, Formalism is only a method of analysis, not a philosophy of art or method of composition. Moreover, there is no evidence for its having had any direct influence on Stravinsky or even his Parisian milieu. Nevertheless, it can be regarded as constituting part of a larger drift toward some new aesthetic orientations characteristic of modernism and reflected in writers such as Jean Cocteau, who was part of Stravinsky's intellectual community. For Cocteau, poetry reveals "all the surprising things by which we are surrounded, and which our senses register mechanically," but the mere hunting out of novel sensations is the work of a bad poet; the reader must be shown "the things which his mind and eye pass over every day, but from such an angle, and such a speed that he seems to be seeing them and experiencing them emotionally for the first time."[27] Cocteau shared

[26] Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," in *Russian Formalist Criticism*, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 12.

[27] *Cocteau's World: An Anthology of Writings by Jean Cocteau*, ed. Margaret Crosland (New York, 1972), pp. 368–69.

with the Formalists a preference for parodistic and surrealistic styles in which conventions and objects made familiar through accumulated experience maintain their identity while being subjected to far-reaching, often whimsical, formal transformations. More particularly, the method of montage, adopted by the surrealists and, as Stravinsky has himself indicated, assuming considerable prominence in his own work,[28] was well suited to the "estrangement" of elements required by the Formalists. Montage, significantly, stands in an antithetical relationship to Classicism, for its very purpose is to destroy the illusion of aesthetic autonomy through the persistent and "nonlogical" intrusion of the unanticipated object or event. For Stravinsky the effect is partly achieved by drawing capriciously upon everyday musical bric-a-brac. Such material openly consorts with elements drawn from the composer's "historical" sources; there is no attempt at integration. Like the surrealists, Stravinsky wishes the familiar to be interpreted as a sign, but not necessarily one that is to be reasonably explained by its context. Questionable, therefore, are attempts that have been made to attribute to him methods of composition whose formal criteria remain those of cohesion, balance, and unity. This can only be done, as the analyses of E. T. Cone clearly show, by abstracting pitch elements from the context of rhythm, phrasing, and articulation, the very components that Stravinsky so meticulously contrives in patterns that will relentlessly disrupt continuity and closure.[29]

With Stravinsky, conventions of the past do not merely reemerge touched up to suit modern taste, as is the case in Neo-Classicism at large. Rather they are provocatively exposed, together with the devices by which they are elaborated, so that their "estrangedness" in a modernist context can be more pointedly revealed. This purpose is most strikingly achieved when everything in the music is made to happen on the surface. Thus Stravinsky's tonal planes do not integrate but instead overlap, while his metric and rhythmic groupings are rigorously tied to a governing pulse which is mechanically, rather than "interpretively," quickened or slowed. Such methods stand in clear contrast to those of Schoenberg, for whom (as Carl Dahlhaus has

[28] Regarding *Oedipus Rex*, Stravinsky admitted; "Much of the music is a *Merzbild*, put together from whatever came to hand." *Dialogues and a Diary* (New York, 1963), p. 27. A description of how the fugue in *Orpheus* was assembled, montage-fashion, is given by Stravinsky in *Stravinsky*, ed. Edwin Corle (New York, 1949), p. 146.

[29] See E. T. Cone, "Stravinsky: The Progress of a Method," in *Perspectives on Schoenberg and Stravinsky*, ed. Benjamin Boretz and Edward T. Cone (New York, 1972), pp. 155–64.

already noted) it is essential that technique remain hidden and that rhythmic and textural "depth" be maintained.[30] Moreover, while Stravinsky turns his attention almost exclusively to concrete particulars (an inclination which shows itself clearly in the Craft conversations), Schoenberg prefers to speak of the "idea" which is not to be identified with any of its associated details but rather with the totality of relationships that make up the work. If, then, Schoenberg's posture is the more "Classical," it is so because of a respect for structural logic rather than for convention in itself. In stressing the principle of "versification," Stravinsky means to elevate convention and its surface manipulation to a principle of form. For Schoenberg, convention is only that which is to be dissolved in the stream of "musical prose"; whatever remains of it is only a shadow against which is illuminated the personal vision.

The case for a Neo-Classical outlook in Schoenberg's twelve-tone works composed between the wars is generally based on his apparent return to traditional form types as well as some of the structural processes associated with them. Rosen, in his Schoenberg book, claims that the composer considered such types to be "ideal shapes" which "could be realized at any time in any style; they were absolute."[31] He is puzzled by Schoenberg's decision to overlook contradictions between such forms and his own personal language, since "more than any other musician of his generation, he understood how the classical forms, especially the sonata, were bound up with tonality."[32] Clarification of this problem requires, first of all, that a more careful distinction be made between a traditionalist academicism (and its Neo-Classical offshoots) which would, of course, give tonality and its related forms an "absolute" status, and Schoenberg's opposed view which precisely insists that both be tied to history and culture. Second, it should be recalled that in the *Harmonielehre* and elsewhere the composer expressed his conviction that even with Classicism tonality was not the sole determinant of form: "we shall find in the classics, besides the unity of tonal relations, that at least the same end of coherence is attained with at least the same amount of carefulness, through the unity of configurations, the unity of ideas."[33] Admittedly,

[30] Carl Dahlhaus, "Musikalischer Funktionalismus," in *Schönberg und andere: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Neuen Musik* (Mainz, 1978), p. 61.

[31] Rosen, p. 96.

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] "Problems of Harmony," *Style and Idea*, p. 279.

to insist in this way on the equally significant form-determining functions of motives and themes is perhaps to interpret the Classical sonata in terms of later developments; thus would be justified the later nineteenth-century tendency for motives and themes to take on an increasing share of a weakening tonality's work, and finally (in the early twentieth century) the whole burden as tonality drops away altogether. From this perspective it is not difficult for Schoenberg to see twelve-tone composition as a historical consummation. In his view, the contradiction of form and language (of which he is accused by Rosen) only arises when the demands of historically determined materials are not met. This would obviously be the case, notes Schoenberg, with the polytonal Neo-Classicists: their simpler thematic materials and phrase structures are such as should actually be given no more than a straightforward tonal treatment, whereas his, by their very nature, will "inevitably bring about the creation of new forms."[34]

The twelve-tone method seeks to avert the dilemma which overtook Neo-Classicism by ensuring that composers using it will be prevented from slipping back to formulas and idioms belonging to historically earlier stages. Yet in doing so it does not, in turn, provide a replacement for tonality; perhaps the really indicative observation on this question was made by Schoenberg in 1923, when, in responding to Hauer, he declared that the finding of a replacement for tonality would be the task of a *theory* of twelve-tone composition, one in which he of course was never to show any personal interest.[35] Rosen's complaint that Schoenbergian serialism ignores just those facets of the motive which are the most significant for expression—namely, shape and texture[36]—echoes charges made by not a few theorists in regard to the nonsystem's systematic insufficiencies. All such criticism falls wide of the mark in not recognizing Schoenberg as the creator who believes that he can entrust himself, blindly as it were, to the deed because he has history on his side; that which constitutes musical expression (Rosen's shape and texture) does not require systematic control because it will be taken care of by man's historical being. Thus a significant paradox is illuminated: "A hand that dares to renounce so

[34] Leonard Stein, "Five Statements by Schoenberg," *Perspectives of New Music*, XIV/1 (1975), 167.

[35] "Hauer's Theories," *Style and Idea*, p. 209.

[36] Rosen, p. 112.

much of the achievements of our forefathers has to be exercised thoroughly in the techniques that are to be replaced by the new methods."[37] The historically rooted creator is at one and the same time he who is prepared to renounce the past; he is not to be confused with the one who imitates traditional models. Schoenberg emphasizes that, unlike many of his Neo-Classical contemporaries, who seek solutions by holding up historical parallels, he need only follow his (historical) feeling for form.[38]

If Schoenberg does call into service older form types—sonata, rondo, theme and variations—it is not because he considers them to be "ideal," or because he attributes to them "innate expressive qualities,"[39] but because he sees in them usages which should not be dispensed with until the novel and more difficult aspects of his musical language are better understood. Similar in purpose is his allegedly Neo-Classical disposition for phrase types and sequential constructions reminiscent of tonal music (and even supported by analogues for some tonal functions). They are used to apply the brakes to the speed at which the musical process is likely to take place; they contribute to "comprehensibility," that tactful consideration of the listener which was always a major concern of the composer despite his critics' accusations to the contrary. "If comprehensibility is made difficult in one respect," he writes, "it must be made easier in some other respect. Difficult to comprehend in new music are the chords, the melodic intervals and their progression. Therefore a form should be chosen that will on the other hand reduce difficulties by providing a familiar type of unfolding."[40] It is unlikely, however, that by this Schoenberg meant to suggest that he would simply take his models from the past just as he found them and that he would allow their problematic relationship to elements of the new language to go unquestioned. For this would require us to assume that with serialism he simply abandoned his aesthetic of expressive "truthfulness," which had been so decisive in shaping his musical vision during the prewar years and

[37] "A Self-Analysis," *Style and Idea*, p. 76.

[38] "An important difference between me and the polytonalists, the folklorists and all the others who elaborate upon folktunes, dances, and the like in a homophonic style (Stravinsky, Milhaud, the English, Americans and the rest) is that they seek the solution by means of a historical parallel, whereas I had found that solution right at the start simply by heeding the matter at hand and going along with my fantasy and feeling for form." This unpublished note of Schoenberg's is listed by Rufer as D.34, with the title "Polytonalists."

[39] Rosen, p. 98.

[40] "Old Forms in New Music," unpublished, Rufer, D.64 (author's translation).

whose essence is its radically critical relationship with respect to inherited conventions. Such an assumption seems to have been made by Rosen, who believes that after the war Schoenberg turned his back on his immediate past in order to recapture the "security" of Classicism; Rosen finds in the music's "smoothness of surface" evidence for this Neo-Classical orientation. Here again, however, important distinctions are overlooked. The purpose of smooth surfaces in Classicism is to render transparent both the form and the structural process; in Stravinsky, for reasons already described, this characteristic is very much exaggerated: construction and musical result are made equivalent. In regard to Schoenberg, just the contrary holds: for all that an element of construction is revived in twelve-tone composition, the audible musical surface is one that will disguise or run counter to it. This can be felt everywhere: in the under-articulation of phrase beginnings and endings, the obscuring of sharp rhythmic profiles (by means of complementary rhythms spread through all the voices), the avoidance of metric-harmonic emphasis, and a presentation of motives and themes that remains intervallically elusive. Even the conventional separation of the music's thematic moments from those which should be considered more strictly formal is overridden. A rigorous application of the principle of *Ausgleich* ("equalizing-out") ensures that every moment will be of substance: "a transition, a codetta, an elaboration, etc., should not be considered as a thing in its own end."[41] Were this to be permitted, the music's construction would come too close to the surface. In this respect, note the contrast with Stravinsky, for whom it is important to reveal the formal functions that Schoenberg wishes to disguise. Stravinsky will call a variety of musical resources into play to articulate such functions and underline their gestural quality.[42]

The Neo-Classical striving for formal completion and closure, the cadence that comes in spite of everything, hopes to secure music's emancipation from subjectivism. It was an effort much discredited by Schoenberg. What Frank Kermode, in his *The Sense of an Ending*, has described as a consonance of ends with beginnings, that essential "fiction" by which is asserted the aesthetic autonomy of the work,

[41] "Brahms the Progressive," *Style and Idea*, p. 407.

[42] For example: the ribbons of scales and the trilled chords which, in the Octet, prepare the introduction's cadence on the dominant (between cues 4 and 6); or, in the Piano Concerto, the suddenly hushed chords with which the piano submits to the final reprise of the opening march theme (at cue 86).

could no longer be taken for granted by the progressive musical thinker of our age. In the absence of any other solution, one could certainly borrow it from the past: as the cantata *Der neue Klassizismus* (Op. 28, No. 3) so derisively observes, "the main thing is the resolution," flung in the face of a musical substance which no longer inclines toward it. Yet it is evident, too, that Schoenberg had difficulty with the problem of completion, and the earlier twelve-tone works, those thought to be most patently Neo-Classical, offer no more than tentative solutions. For example, the Overture of Suite, Opus 29, contents itself with blatant parodies of I-IV-V-I cadential patterns, the Wind Quintet, Opus 26, with a revival of the First Chamber Symphony's whole-tone and conjoined fourths patterns gathered up into closing formulas, and the Third String Quartet with a nostalgic closing allusion to C major-minor. If an overall drive toward completion is not absent from the patterning of melodic and rhythmic elements, in many instances formal closure is shown to be problematic or else that which can only be hinted at in the backward look. While Schoenberg's principle of substantive filling-out "in all the directions in which the music expands" guarantees the integrity of every musical moment, at the same time ensuring that harmonic tonality be made totally irrelevant to the form, it is also that which will inevitably rob the music of purely formal purpose and hence of the unequivocal directionality which makes ultimate endings possible. Irving Howe has said of the modern writer what can also be said of Schoenberg: not any longer knowing whether answers can be found, he will present us only with his dilemmas; "he offers his *struggle* with them as the substance of his testimony, and whatever unity his work possesses . . . comes from the emotional rhythm, the thrust toward completion, of that struggle. After Kafka it becomes hard to believe not only in answers but even in endings."[43]

Stravinsky appeared to Schoenberg as one who vainly sought to emulate Classical *Formvollendung* which history had already left behind. Yet despite his apparent Neo-Classical conversion, Stravinsky showed little interest in reviving the formal procedures developed by Haydn and Beethoven. As he admits in his *Autobiography*, all he found useful in the past were its form categories or genres in which

[43] Editorial Introduction to *The Idea of the Modern in Literature and the Arts* (New York, 1967), p. 30.

had accumulated a collection of idioms and effects which could serve him as concrete material. Thus he has no compunction in saying, about Beethoven, that it is "in the quality of his musical material and not in the nature of his ideas that his true greatness lies."[44] It should be quite evident, for instance, that the third movement of his Piano Sonata uses the second movement of Beethoven's F-major Sonata, Opus 54, as "material" in exactly that sense, quite dissociated from Beethoven's "ideas" of formal elaboration.

From Schoenberg's position this approach would certainly have little to commend it, but we are required to see the historical outsider's sense of the past (one that the adoption of French manners did little to change) from quite a different angle if the whole phenomenon is not to appear without any meaning whatsoever. A recent analysis by Ernst Waeltner of the Octet for Wind Instruments[45] is helpful in this regard, for it shows how Stravinsky contrived to apply the rhythmic and harmonic principles developed in his earlier "Russian" works to the new stylistic context he adopted. Waeltner does not go so far as to describe the effect gained by attaching to such principles the various isolated materials Stravinsky had pulled out of his historical forages. The effect, namely, is one of witnessing a process by which the formal precepts of Classicism are deliberately turned inside out. Classicism's proportionately varied but texturally and harmonically coordinated flow is now replaced by one that remains obstinately uniform while the coordination of its several textural and harmonic levels is pulled out of phase or otherwise disrupted. Tonal tendencies inherent in the borrowed elements may certainly be given some scope for development or reinterpretation, but the large musical structure is determined less by these tendencies than by imposed time frames, whose measurements are meticulously calculated from without, and to which such tendencies are made to submit. Stravinsky's discovery of what we can now recognize as an essentially cinematic method makes its point in being applied to familiar-sounding materials. In this context, the traditional requirements for formal completion need no longer be considered relevant. Indeed, what Stravinsky insists upon in speaking

[44] *Igor Stravinsky: An Autobiography* (New York, 1962), p. 117.

[45] Ernst Waeltner, "Aspekte zum Neoklassizismus Strawinskys: Schluss-Rhythmus, Thema und Grundriss im Finale des Bläser-Oktetts 1923," in *Bericht über den Internationalen Musikwissenschaftlichen Kongress Bonn, 1970*, ed. Carl Dahlhaus (Kassel, 1973), 265–74.

of "convergence towards repose"[46] is realized more often by an exquisitely graduated "fade-out" (the end of the Octet), or by a more affirmative and ritualistic near-arrest of the time flow through a magnification of its underlying pulse (the "coda-apotheosis" of the Symphonies of Wind Instruments, *Apollo*, and the Symphony of Psalms). Neither have much to do with the resolution of accelerating motion that characterizes the ending of a Classical work.

All things considered, it is questionable whether, as E. T. Cone suggests, we are meant to discover in Stravinsky's procedures an "analogue" for those of Classicism.[47] Rather do we find ourselves reflecting on the fate of familiar stylistic elements now transposed to a new context. Their consequent "estrangement" has little in common, however, with what Brecht meant by "alienation," a device whose purpose it is to help us gain a critical viewpoint of what we already think we know. Stravinsky's compulsive recomposing of old masters has as its purpose not to reveal the past in a new light but to subject it to the demands of the present. In sum, while refusing Schoenberg's historically rooted openness to the future, Stravinsky also bypassed the Neo-Classical program of restoration. Like the disturbingly stilled antique columns and Renaissance architectural façades in the paintings of De Chirico, musical references to the past in Stravinsky serve to remind us of our immediate predicaments.

[46] *Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons* (New York, 1956), pp. 37–38.
[47] E. T. Cone, "The Uses of Convention," p. 29.