DECONSTRUCTING WEBERN’S OP. 25, DREI LIEDER:
A MULTIDIMENSIONAL ASSESSMENT

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Thesis Prepared for the Degree of
MASTER OF MUSIC

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
August 2013

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Webern scholarship has not comprehensively examined op. 25, drei lieder. If the selection of text for op. 25 is viewed as one work in three movements they create a ternary form (A-B-A1). To show how this form is developed in the music the author creates a new analytical system based on Schoenberg’s Grundgestalt which is defined by three basic ideas: symmetry, liquidation, and variation. The relationship between the voice and accompaniment and Webern’s deliberate manipulation of the text is used to reveal the use of a program which is then tied to the numerical symbolsim of 2 and 3.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Mark McKnight, for his encouragement, openness towards my ideas, and willingness to help me see this project to the end. I would also like to thank Dr. Daniel Arthurs for his insight and helpful suggestions, and Dr. Paul Dworak for his guidance throughout this entire process (as well as his patience which knows no bounds). I offer a special thank you to Dr. Graham Phipps who was instrumental in the formation of this thesis. Thank you to my colleagues, especially Tish Davenport; without their help this project would have never happened. Lastly, thank you to my friends and family whose support and faith in me made this possible.
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PREFACE

Research for this thesis began as an investigation to determine what constitutes comprehensibility in Anton Webern’s op. 25, *Drei Lieder*. The results of that research show that Webern achieves comprehensibility with a multidimensional approach that reaches beyond the unifying techniques of serial and twelve-tone composition. With the use of symbolism and intertextuality, Webern carefully selected three excerpts of Hildegard Jone’s poetry in order to create the tripartite expression of life, death, and resurrection in his op. 25, *Drei Lieder*. When the selection of text is viewed as one complete work in three movements, a hidden extramusical program is revealed over a large-scale, ternary form: A (song 1) - B (song 2) - A\(^1\) (song 3). Webern strengthens this program by attaching numerical significance to it as well as the consistent use of variation techniques in the accompaniment.

Due to the specialized terms used in this analysis further explanation of this title is required:

- Intertextuality. This term is a derivative of the Latin word intertexto, meaning “to intermingle while weaving.”\(^1\) During the 1960s the term was coined by Julia Kristeva to mean “text as a network of sign systems situated in relation to other systems of signifying practice.”\(^2\) Over a short period of time the word evolved, and as described by Gérard Genette it came to mean “literature as a ‘second degree’ construct made out of pieces of other texts.”\(^3\) For the purposes of this study, intertextuality refers to Webern’s methods of shaping Jone’s poetry in such a way as to give it new meaning.

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\(^2\) Ibid., 568.

\(^3\) Ibid., 570.
Program. The word program (or program music) in this thesis is understood as "Music that expresses an extra-musical [sic] idea, whether of mood, narrative, or pictorial image."⁴ Webern alters the order and form of these excerpts, which changes the narrative they create. The most likely explanation is that he wanted to convey this specific program because it allowed him to express something personal with an otherwise impersonal language.

Extramusical. The ternary form created by these text considers the return of ‘A’ to be a variation; hence, A - B - A¹. By using this form, Webern is able to symbolize life (corporeal and spiritual), death (transcendence of the corporeal life), and resurrection (of the spiritual life); the term extramusical is used to explain this perspective.

The focus of this study is divided into three parts, as follows:

Chapters 1 and 2 are a review of the existing scholarship concerning Webern’s op. 25 followed by an analysis of the op. 25 text. This poetry analysis examines the life and artistic philosophy of Hildegard Jone, analyzes the op. 25 excerpts, and explores the reasons behind Webern’s selection of these particular excerpts. To do this requires a critical approach that employs aspects of both hermeneutics and art criticism. Although these are speculative systems of analysis, there exists much evidence in previous scholarship and in Webern’s own writings to understand what inspired him and to determine, albeit with some speculation, what he intended op. 25 to represent. Applying these types of analysis helps the reader to understand the intent of the composer.

Chapters 3 and 4 establish Webern’s conception of unity and comprehensibility. This is followed by a preliminary analysis of the primary row from op. 25, which is used to define the

Grundgestalt. All three songs are analyzed in succession to demonstrate Webern’s use of Grundgestalt as a guide for motivic development and formal construction.

Chapter 5 reconciles the conclusions from the previous chapters. The relationship of the soprano to the accompaniment is explored. This is followed by a discussion on the significance behind Webern’s use of the text, the numbers 2 and 3, and the levels of manipulation in which these things occur. This study then concludes with a few suggestions on how the results should be applied to future research into Webern’s music.
CHAPTER 1
OPUS 25 SCHOLARSHIP

1.1 Previous Scholarship

Previous scholarship regarding Webern’s op. 25 comes from three principal sources. Of these three only Kathryn Bailey examines the entire song cycle. Bailey’s analysis focuses on the primary row and its permutations used in op. 25. Included in her study are a twelve-tone matrix and a few diagrams that detail the position, voice, and location of each row statement for all three songs. Although Bailey gives valuable insights into Webern’s methods of composition, her analysis of op. 25 is limited due to the size and focus of her study. Absent in Bailey’s analysis of op. 25 is any investigation of the internal relationships of the row, text, or formal processes of op. 25. My study builds on Bailey’s work by focusing on the aspects missing in her work.

Joseph Straus provides a serial analysis of the basic row for the first song from op. 25, “Wie bin ich froh”.5 The source of this analysis is an introductory text for post-tonal studies. His conclusions are pedagogically based and meant to illustrate a point about organization to the novice; they do not necessarily reflect his complete or professional opinion of op. 25. That said, his analysis shows how Webern organized the interval content and points out that it is dominated by (014) trichords transposed by a perfect-fourth; however, he does not discuss the ramifications this has for “Wie bin ich froh.”6 Straus also makes the following statement about the rhythmic structure of “Wie bin ich froh”: “The lack of a steady meter may initially contribute to the listener’s disorientation . . . The music ebbs and flows rhythmically rather than following some strict pattern . . . There is no way of knowing, in advance, which intervals or groups of intervals

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6 This is because it is inconsequential to the particular point he is trying to make.
will turn out to be important in organizing this, or any, post-tonal work.”7 In contrast to Straus’s views, my study provides an alternative solution to the organization of the row and then demonstrates that the rhythmic element in this song, while its substructures are complex, may be seen as regular.8

Christopher Wintle’s study discusses at length the poetic meter and rhythmic setting of the third song from op. 25, “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen der Nacht.9 Wintle extrapolates the expressive qualities in Webern’s setting and makes a number of comparisons between it and select vocal works by Schoenberg, and by Schubert. He discusses text painting and attempts to read meaning into the music; however, his interpretation is limited for two reasons: (1) he uses the English translation (performance oriented) published in the 1956 Universal Edition score, and (2) the context of the poetry is not considered with regard to the first two songs or its original publication. Although Wintle’s interpretation is sound when the song is isolated, an alternative interpretation emerges when viewed in context of the other two songs.

1.2 Related Scholarship

There are a few studies that mention op. 25 without going into any real detail but they do point out some interesting features. Julian Johnson’s book, *Webern and the Transformation of Nature*, explores the influence of nature in Webern’s music from a social and cultural perspective and provides a number of ideas on how this perspective affects the organization of Webern’s compositions. One idea in particular was Webern’s use of the text as a guide for his

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7 Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*, 23. Straus’s point is that students new to the Post-Tonal repertoire should approach the music without presupposition.
8 Straus’s point here is addressed in chapter 4.1 of this paper.
instrumental music. He briefly mentions op. 25 and takes notice of the somewhat similar
textures of song 1, “Wie bin ich froh,” and song 3, “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen.”10 In regard to
“Wie bin ich froh,” he describes the rhythm in the accompaniment as “a continually varied
repetition of the same basic piano gesture”; I expand on this statement by showing the specific
procedures Webern uses to accomplish this. My study also builds on Johnson’s claim that a
duality exists in the purely musical gesture: 1) the gesture without any referential content, and 2)
the historically mediated gesture.11 He then adds, “to suggest that this duality disappears in
serial music is to equate the idea of musical expression with tonality, an erroneous division that
is only possible if one denies the obvious historical relation of one to the other.”12 This assertion
opens the discussion for a more expressive interpretation of Webern’s music, one not exclusively
confined to traditional methods of twelve-tone and serial music.

In her article, “An Aural and Vocal Approach to the Songs of Anton Webern,” Helen
Pridmore analyzes Webern’s lieder from the viewpoint of the vocalist. Pridmore discusses
Webern’s compositional style and traces his development as a composer through his vocal
music. Ultimately she does not recommend performing it for beginning students, citing its
difficulty, despite the perception is that it is one of his easier songs. Pridmore argues that all of
the elements of traditional nineteenth-century lieder are present in his music including the op. 25
then links his sensitivity in the setting of the text to that of Schubert. Her perspective is valuable,
for it suggests that there is a solid connection to the performance tradition of the nineteenth-
century lieder; this observation in turn gives a more complete picture of Webern’s composition
practices.

11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 185.
The authoritative source concerning the life and poetry of Hildegard Jone is the dissertation of Thomas Reineke. In his study he briefly mentions op. 25 and confirms that there was no collaboration between Jone and Webern on the creation of any particular piece. What is extremely helpful is that Reineke traces and details the publication history of Jone’s works. He briefly discusses Webern’s use of Jone’s text in addition to providing a copy of all the excerpts Webern had used. One interesting observation is that he confirms the fact that Webern made use of Jone’s texts in some of his instrumental works.

1.3 Issues in Op. 25 Scholarship

With the exception of Bailey’s row descriptions and diagrams, there is no published analysis of the second song, “Des Herzens Purpurvogel.” Also missing in Webern scholarship is an in-depth analysis of Jone’s text. In the case of op. 25, however, there is a possible explanation for the missing text analysis. The authoritative reference source for Webern is the biography by Hans Moldenhauer. In this biography Moldenhauer incorrectly identifies the title of the poetry from which op. 25 is taken as “Die Freunde” (the friends); the correct title, however, is “Die Freude” (the joy). See Figure 1.1.

This mistake creates a curious situation in Christopher Wintle’s study of the third song. Because he used Moldenhauer as his primary biographical source he too erroneously identifies the poetry as being taken from “Die Freunde.” That Wintle’s interpretation of this poetry is dependent on the incorrect title is evidenced when he says, “This [op. 25] sets the words by

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14 In general, there is a notable lack of scholarship on Webern’s op. 25, *Drei Lieder*. Before 1979 there are roughly sixteen articles that mention op. 25. Articles after 1979 are reviewed at the beginning of this paper.

Hildegard Jone drawn from the cycle *Die Freunde*. The fact that Jone was both a woman and a devoted friend was undoubtedly of supreme creative importance to Webern; yet to modern tastes the appeal of her text is not immediately obvious.”

![Facsimile of page 16, Die Schildgenossen (October, 1933), which correctly identifies the poetry as “Die Freude.”](image)

*Figure 1.1. Facsimile of page 16, Die Schildgenossen (October, 1933), which correctly identifies the poetry as “Die Freude.”*

Although this interpretation is not wrong, per se, it is difficult to see how Wintle came to that conclusion based on anything but the erroneous title. In the next chapter my research shows that it was Jone’s religious philosophy and creativity expressed in her poetry that captivated Webern and led to their friendship.

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16 This is where Wintle includes the citation to Moldenhauer.
CHAPTER 2

HILDEGARD JONE, OPUS 25 TEXT, AND WEBERN’S INTERPRETATION

This chapter is in four parts. First is a short discussion on hermeneutics and why its application is necessary in my study. Second is a review of Hildegard Jone’s life and poetry. Third is a poetry and symbol analysis of the op. 25 text. Fourth and last is an examination of Webern’s own possible interpretations of this text.

2.1 Meaning and Intention

Attempting to determine meaningful intention in Webern’s music creates a few challenges. In his article, “Atonality, Analysis, and the Intentional Fallacy,” Ethan Haimo addresses this issue by discussing the validity of applying Allen Forte’s set-class theory to Schoenberg’s music even though Schoenberg never talked or wrote about using this technique. Haimo argues that the analysis which assumes Schoenberg intentionally used set classes can result in “untenable” conclusions; in other words, justifying an analysis based on the composer’s intention can produce erroneous results. This statement about intentionality is in reference to an article on literary criticism by W. K. Wimsatt Jr. and Monroe Beardsley, titled “The Intentional Fallacy.” Wimsatt and Beardsley posit that the intentionality of the author or composer is irrelevant to the “critic’s judgement.”

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18 Ibid., 190.
instances looking for evidence in the writings and manuscripts of the composer may be warranted.

Edward Cone, in his article “Schubert's Promissory Note: An Exercise in Musical Hermeneutics,” discusses the possible meaning behind an unresolved leading tone in Schubert’s Moments musicals, D.780, no. 6. In order to derive meaning from this situation Cone borrows two concepts from Wilson Coker. The first concept is congeneric meaning, which Cone describes as “meaning... [that] ... depends on purely musical relationships.”20 The second concept, extrageneric meaning, Cone describes as “the supposed reference of a musical work to non-musical objects.”21 One important point he makes is that in hermeneutics content can be mistakenly conflated with genre. His example of this is a description of the funeral march and how the generic description of a slow pace with minor harmonies indicates the style but not the specific content. Because op. 25 is a twelve-tone work the hazards of confusing content with genre are not necessarily a problem as there is no outside reference for this music in the same way as specific genres of tonality.

In the case of Webern’s op. 25, meaning and intention can be looked at in one of two different ways. One, Webern had no reason to compose this song cycle other than the notes on the page, or two, Webern’s selection of the text and subsequent setting thereof is significant and holds meaning for him. My study considers the latter, which requires that an analytical process be created in order to determine Webern’s intentions as much as possible. Although determining extrageneric meaning is speculative analysis, it is necessary in order to ascertain Webern’s potential reasoning for choosing of these excerpts.

21 Ibid., 61.
2.2 Hildegard Jone

Hildegard Jone (1891-1963) was a lesser-known artist and poet with whom Webern shared a professional relationship and a meaningful friendship. Her father, Ludwig Huber, recognized Jone’s visual and literary talent early on in her life and made a conscious effort to help realize that potential. In 1908, she and her mother Amalie moved from their home in Sarajevo to Vienna, where Jone began attending the Wiener Kunstschule für Frauen und Mädchen (Viennese School of Art for Women and Girls). While refining her skills at the Kunstschule, Jone became the private student of sculptor Joseph Humplik, whom she eventually married in 1921.22

The first publications of Jone’s poetry came in 1918.23 Although her critics initially labeled her an expressionist, she began to drift toward a particular kind of natural-spiritualism. Julian Johnson observes that Jone’s personal faith was a distinct phenomenon that came about in the post-Viennese fin d’siécle and blended “Catholic mysticism” with a uniquely Austrian Natursgefühl.24

In the early the 1920s Jone began to attend lectures by philosopher Karl Kraus, a literary and social critic who helped shape the intellectual and political culture of early twentieth-century Austria. Kraus, who was known to have espoused some rather extreme views on writing, significantly influenced both Webern and Jone.25 This influence is evident in Jone’s ethical

22 Reineke, “Hildegard Jone” (1891-1963), 76.
23 Hildegard Jone, “Abgrundseele [Soul of the Abyss],” Ver! 26, no. 27 (1918): 374-375. This was Jone’s first publication.
24 Johnson, Webern and the Transformation of Nature, 168. Before Vatican II this kind of spiritualism was often identified as Catholic Mysticism. Natursgefühl is a sentimental feeling for nature.
25 Ernst Krenek once recalled having an interesting encounter with Kraus, “Als man sich gerade über die Beschießung von Shanghai durch die Japaner erregte und ich Karl Kraus bei einem der berühmten Beistrich-Problemen antraf, sagte er ungefähr: Ich weiß, daß das alles sinnlos ist, wenn das Haus in Brand steht. Aber solange das irgend möglich ist, muß ich das machen, denn hätten die Leute, die dazu verpflichtet sind, immer darauf geachtet, daß die Beistriche am richtigen Platz stehen, so würde Shanghai nicht brennen.” [During a time when
sensitivity to word choice and the confidence to express her religious convictions through poetry. When Jone and Webern finally met in 1926, their mutual admiration for Kraus undoubtedly helped forge a strong and lasting friendship. Webern had only published one setting of a Kraus poem, op. 13, *Vier Lieder for Voice and Orchestra*, although forty-seven pages of five incomplete settings of Kraus’s poetry were discovered after his death.

In 1927 Jone began to gain some notoriety when she published a collection of poems titled *Das Mensch im Dunkeln* in the highly esteemed cultural magazine titled *Der Brenner*. *Der Brenner* was a bimonthly periodical founded by Ludwig von Ficker in 1910 that began as a local platform for activists speaking out against the bourgeois class in the Austrian state of Tyrol. Eventually *Der Brenner* gained a wider audience and began to include German authors, most notable of whom was Theodor Haecker. The types of poetry Jone submitted to *Der Brenner* were “heilsgeschichtlichen Perspektive” (salvation-historical perspectives), as opposed to her Catholic publications, which had a singular calling to become more and more the “große Trost- und Mitleidsstimme” or the great voice of comfort and compassion.

Jone held Teresa of Avila and Hildegard of Bingen in very high regard, as they were the “focus of her religious and spiritual aspirations.” Her poetry in the religiously themed

people were agitated over the Japanese bombing of Shanghai, I met Karl Kraus at work on one of his famous comma problems, he said roughly: ‘I know that this is all meaningless if the house is on fire. But as long as this is possible, I must do it, because if the people were committed to always make sure that the commas are in the right place, then Shanghai would not burn; author translation]; cited in Hans Weigel, *Karl Kraus oder die Macht der Ohnmacht* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1968), 125.

periodicals *Die Schildgenossen* (1930) and in *Die Christliche Frau* (1931) led to notoriety in Catholic circles and fostered her reputation as “[ein] Beispiel für die neue Religiosität unserer Zeit” ([an] example for the new religiosity of our time) throughout German-speaking Europe.\(^{30}\) She inadvertently ventured into the world of music when Webern completed three song cycles set to her poetry in 1934-35: op. 23, *Drei Lieder on Viae Inviae*; op. 25, *Drei Lieder on excerpts from Die Freude*; and op. 26 on *Das Augenlicht from Viae Inviae*.\(^{31}\) Although they never directly collaborated on any lieder, it is clear in their correspondence that they found sincere and genuine inspiration in each other’s creative vision.

Jone was opposed to the Nazi Anschluss and considered them to be occupiers. She completely rejected the Nazis’ use of propaganda and promptly refused all offers to work for pro-Nazi publications.\(^{32}\) Having then survived the war she worked as a publisher in Vienna for Herder Verlag from 1946 to 1949. Although Jone was retired during the 1950s, her poetry continued to be published in several anthologies. In May of 1957 the Austrian artists union, Viennese Secession, honored Jone and her husband, Joseph Humplik, with a showcase of both their work. Jone spent her final days in Purkersdorf, Austria, where she died in 1958; she is now honored with a permanent exhibit in the local museum.

2.3 Background of the Op. 25 Text

For op. 25 Webern selected three excerpts from Jone’s *Die Freude*. *Die Freude* is a collection of poetry published in an October 1933 edition of *Die Schildgenossen*.\(^{33}\) It is

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\(^{30}\) Heinrich Getzeny, *Literarischen Ratgeber für die Katholiken Deutschlands 1926-28*.

\(^{31}\) Webern’s other settings of Jone include Cantata no. 1 on Lumen-Zyklus (1938) and Cantata no. 2 on Freundselig (1941). There are also sketches of an op. 32 intended to set Jone’s *Das Sonnenlicht spricht*; see Reineke, 400-8.

\(^{32}\) Reineke, “Hildegard Jone (1891-1963)”*, 76.

important to point out that Webern never actually collaborated with Jone. He chose all of her texts from then-current publications and usually without her knowledge. Webern first mentions the op. 25 excerpts in a letter to Jone dated July 9, 1934, saying, “For reasons that I have still to recount, I have interrupted that [op. 24] to begin another, namely the composition of a short poem of yours [op. 25].”\textsuperscript{34} Not only does this show that there was no collaboration, it also raises the question as to why Webern started composing op. 25 nearly three months before completing op. 24 (October 8). It is likely there are two reasons for this: (1) Webern had developed material for the op. 24 which he would be unable to use for that piece specifically, and (2) he had found the perfect text.

The order in which these excerpts appear in op. 25 is also altered from Jone’s original presentation in \textit{Die Freude}. Correspondence between Jone and Webern also confirms this fact. After he finished “Wie bin ich froh!” (September 12) Webern began work on the third song, “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen,” which was completed just over a month later (October 17).\textsuperscript{35} The entire song cycle finally came together on November 15, 1934, with Webern completing the second song, “Des Herzens Purpurvogel,” in twenty-two days. The reason for which Webern intentionally changed the order of the songs becomes clear after a thorough examination of Jone’s text; however, because Webern was deliberate in his text selection, op. 25 should be viewed as one complete work in three movements. English translations are provided for performance purposes in the 1956 Universal Edition score of op. 25, and although they are similar in tone there are small but important discrepancies from the original German. To avoid


any potential problems this might cause and for a clearer comprehension of the texts, I have
provided my own translations.

2.4 Opus 25 Text Translation and Analysis

2.4.1 “Wie bin ich froh!” Translation and Analysis

Wie bin ich froh! Noch einmal wird mir alles grün und leuchtet so! Noch über blühn die
Blumen mir die Welt! Noch einmal bin ich ganz ins Werden hingestellt und bin auf
Erden.

How happy I am! Once more everything to me becomes green and lights up so! Yet to
me the flower flowers over the world! Once more I am totally placed into becoming and I
am on Earth.

Jone’s “Wie bin ich froh” is the first poem in Die Freude and serves as an invocation for
the entire collection.36 It was originally published as two quatrains with an alternating rhyme
scheme represented here with the letters “a” and “b.”37 See Figure 2.1.

a. “Wie bin ich froh”!(4)
   b. Noch einmal wird mir alles grün (8)
      a. und leuchtet so! (4)
      b. Noch überblühn (4)
         a. die Blumen mir die Welt!(6)
         b. Noch einmal bin ich ganz ins Werden,(9)
            a. hingestellt(3)
            b. und bin auf Erden.(5)

Figure 2.1. The original form of “Wie bin ich froh”.

If, however, the poem is looked at based on punctuation and word repetition, the opening
line stands out as a kind of introduction and the remainder of the poem, verses 2, 3, 4, all begin

36 Jone, Die Schildgenossen, 16.
37 Syllable count in subscript.
with the same word, *noch* (again). See Figure 2.2.

Verse 1 (introduction): “Wie bin ich froh”!
Verse 2: Noch einmal wird mir alles grün und leuchtet so!
Verse 3: Noch über blühn die Blumen mir die Welt!
Verse 4: Noch einmal bin ich ganz ins Werden hingestellt und bin auf Erden.

*Figure 2.2.* “Wie bin ich froh” divided into verses based on terminal punctuation.

Verse 2 and 4 are similar because of repetition and synonymity respective to word position for the first five words. See Figure 2.3.

Verse 2: Noch • einmal • wird • mir • alles
Verse 4: Noch • einmal • bin • ich • ganz

*Figure 2.3.* Comparison of verse 2 and 4 of “Wie bin ich froh”.

Following the shared lyrics *noch einmal* are two verbs related to being: *bin* (am) and *wird* (become); then two first-person-singular pronouns: *mir* (me) and *ich* (I); and a pronoun and adjective: *alles* (everything) and *ganz* (whole). With the similarities between verses 2 and 4 Jone folds a ternary gesture into a binary structure. Consequently, the form could also be considered thus: (v.1)intro - (v.2)A - (v.3)B - (v.4)A$^1$.  

“Wie bin ich froh” is a celebration of life. The descriptive imagery of blooming flowers overflowing an alpine valley replete with evergreens during spring expresses a tone of ecstatic joy. Jone’s metaphor for being grounded, *hingestellt*, literally means “put (down),” indicating that this setting is a tangible, physical reality. Coincidentally, the 1956 performance edition reinforces this interpretation by translating “bin auf Erden” as “I am mortal.” The repeated use

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38 Ibid. (v.1) Means verse 1, (v.2) means verse 2, etc.
of noch (again) conveys rebirth and renewal. Overall, what “Wie bin ich froh” symbolizes is not only life, but a corporeal life.

2.4.2 “Des Herzens Purpurvogel fliegt durch Nacht,” Translation and Analysis

Des Herzens Purpurvogel fliegt durch Nacht. Der Augen Falter, die im Hellen gaukeln, sind ihm voraus, wenn sie ins Tage schaukeln. Und doch ist er’s, der sie ans Ziel gebracht. Sie ruhen oft, die bald sich neu erheben zu neuem Flug. Doch rastet endlich er am Ast des Todes, müd und flügel schwer, dann müssen sie zum letzen Blick verbeben.

The magenta bird of the heart flies through night. The eyes of butterflies play tricks in the light, ahead of him where they sway in the day. Yet it is he, who brought them to their aim. Often they rest soon rise again to new flight. But finally he rests on the perch of death, heavy winged and tired, then they must with one last glance expire.

“Des Herzens Purpurvogel fliegt durch Nacht” (henceforth “Des Herzens Purpurvogel”) is an excerpt from a poem titled “September,” the third and last poem in the collection Die Freude. The form is an octet reminiscent of the first eight lines of a Petrarchan sonnet with an enclosed rhyme scheme, a b b a; a b b a. “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” also bears a resemblance to the ottava rima, which also contains eight lines with syllable counts of ten and eleven. See Figure 2.4.

a. “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” fliegt durch Nacht.(10)

b. Der Augen Falter, die im Hellen gaukeln.(11)

b. sind ihm voraus, wenn sie ins Tage schaukeln.(11)

a. Und doch ist er’s, der sie ans Ziel gebracht.(10)

a. Sie ruhen oft, die bald sich neu erheben.(11)

b. zu neuem Flug. Doch rastet endlich er.(10)

b. am Ast des Todes, müd und flügel schwer.(10)

a. dann müssen sie zum letzen Blick verbeben.(11)

Figure 2.4. The original form of “Des Herzens Purpurvogel”.”

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39 It is possible that this is a reference to Johann Goethe’s epistolary novel Die Leiden des jungen Werthers which ends tragically with Werther committing suicide.
Based on punctuation, there is a series of five verses which Jone parsed by making lines 1 through 4 to split into three verses and lines 5 through 8 into two verses. See Figure 2.5.

Verse 1: “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” fliegt durch Nacht.
Verse 2: Der Augen Falter, die im Hellen gaukeln, sind ihm voraus, wenn sie ins Tage schaukeln.
Verse 3: Und doch ist er’s, der sie ans Ziel gebracht.
Verse 4: Sie ruhen oft, die bald sich neu erheben zu neuem Flug.
Verse 5: Doch rastet endlich er am Ast des Todes, müd und flügel schwer, dann müssen sie zum letzen Blick verbeben.

Figure 2.5. “Des Herzens Purpurvogel”, “divided by verse based on terminal punctuation.

In contrast to “Wie bin ich froh,” “Des Herzens Purpurvogel,” takes place at night, presumably in a forest. The use of the color magenta in the larger context of September invokes the turning leaves of deciduous aspen groves. The story in “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” depicts two creatures in the throes of death, who are, in a sense, coming to terms with the final moments of their life cycle. The magenta bird of the heart has a dualistic connotation, one being the blood that is physically pumped through the heart and the other a reference to the mythical phoenix. Jone’s use of Augen Falter refers to the Augenfalter, a subfamily of butterflies scientifically known as the Satyridae. The Satyridae bear markings that resemble eyes and are known for being “weak flyers” as well as avoiding “direct sunlight.”

The butterfly and phoenix are both symbolic of transformation and metamorphosis, but there is an important distinction between the two. A subtle layer of meaning exists if one views

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40 The importance of this division is discussed more fully in chapter 4.
41 The phoenix is a mythical bird that is reborn from its ashes after it dies. It represents life, death, and resurrection as well as from chaos. The actual meaning of the word Phoenix is magenta bird. The Greek root word phoinos means blood red; however, over time it came to represent tyrian purple and eventually magenta and fuscia (which also shares the root word phoinos). Douglas Harper, http://www.etymonline.com,” s.v. “Fuscia, Phoenix.” (accessed March 10, 2013).
this as a blending of the natural (butterfly), with the supernatural (phoenix). Considering Jone’s religiosity this could also represent a transition from the physical world to the spiritual world. The emotionally detached language with a slightly reverent tone reinforces this similarity. In the end they arrive and rest for the last time. In the final line Jone describes the bird and butterflies as “verbeben,” or ceasing to twitch, which clearly represents death, but more specifically it represents a corporeal death, not a spiritual one.

2.4.3 “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen der Nacht,” Translation and Analysis

Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen der Nacht um die Blume der Liebe! Wahrlich der Honig aus ihr hängt schimmernd an Euch. Lasset ihn tropfen ins Herz, in die goldene Wabe, füllet sie an bis zum Rand. Ach schon tropfet sie über, selig und bis ans Ende mit ewiger Süße durchtränkt.

Stars, you silver bees of the night ‘round the flower of love! Lo, the honey from it hangs shimmering on you. Let it drip into the heart, into the golden honeycomb, and fill’eth it to the brim. Alas, already it drips over, blessed and to the end imbued with everlasting sweetness.

“Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” is originally from a poem called “Die Liebenden” (the loving or the loving one).43 “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” is a sestet composed of two parallel tercets with a less definitive rhyme-scheme of a - b - c; a₁ - b - c₁. Incidentally, this completes the Petrarchan sonnet which song 2, “Des Herzens Purpurvogel,” began.44 The syllable count is progressive with the exception of line 2.

The rhyme scheme is not as clear as it is in songs 1 and 2. Nacht and wabe share the short ä vowel sound and the pronunciation of liebe and über can be slightly altered and made to rhyme. Durchtränkt, however, does not rhyme with Euch, but it does rhyme with hängt, which

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43 Jone, Die Schildgenossen, 17. “Die Liebenden” is a poem from the Die Freude collection.

44 A Petrarchan sonnet consists of one octet with the rhyme scheme, a-b-b-a-a-b-b-a, followed by a sestet with a rhyme scheme of c-d-e; c-d-e.
appears in the same line and before *Euch*. Figure 2.7 uses punctuation to divide the poem’s six lines into four separate verses.\(^{45}\)

a. “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” der Nacht\(^{(10)}\)
b. um die Blume der Liebe!\(^{(7)}\)
c. Wahrlich der Honig aus ihr hängt schimmernd an Euch.\(^{(12)}\)
a1. Lasset ihn tropfen ins Herz, in die goldene Wabe.\(^{(13)}\)
b. füllet sie an bis zum Rand. Ach schon tropfet sie über.\(^{(14)}\)
c1. selig und bis ans Ende mit ewiger Süße durchtränkt.\(^{(15)}\)

*Figure 2.6. The original form of “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen.”*

Verse 1: “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” der Nacht um die Blume der Liebe!

Verse 2: Wahrlich der Honig aus ihr hängt schimmernd an Euch.

Verse 3: Lasset ihn tropfen ins Herz, in die goldene Wabe, füllet sie an bis zum Rand.

Verse 4: Ach schon tropfet sie über, selig und bis ans Ende mit ewiger Süße durchtränkt.

*Figure 2.7. “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen,” divided by verse based on terminal punctuation.*

The language in “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” is more ambiguous than its counterparts. The natural imagery has transformed from a physical reality to a metaphorical one. For example, the bees are not bees but stars, congregating around the flower of love, which is not an actual flower but rather a metaphor for God’s love. For deeply spiritual non-practicing Catholics like Jone and Webern, gold and silver could refer to something the Papal Coat of Arms, which depicts the Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven given to Simon-Peter in Matthew 16:20 as crossed keys, one gold, and one silver. Jone bathes the setting in a golden yellow light by describing the drops of golden honey as shimmering. The eternal sweetness could be interpreted as an allusion to eternal happiness; however, the flower of love in the context of bees and honey suggests the

\(^{45}\) The importance of this division is discussed more fully in chapter 4.
typical eroticism one associates with poetry. On the other hand, throughout Die Liebenden there are several references to God. The text directly following “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” makes it clear that the poem is referencing a divine type of love, not an erotic love. See Figure 2.8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>original</th>
<th>translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mit Sternenzeilen vollgeschrieben is die nacht</td>
<td>The night is fully written with star-lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mit Gottes Größe,</td>
<td>with God's greatness,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mit Reinheit, Reinheit</td>
<td>with purity, purity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>und mit Liebe</td>
<td>and with love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Es kreisen goldne Becher, ganz erfüllt</td>
<td>it circles the golden cup, completely filled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mit Leben</td>
<td>with life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>durch Dunkelheit</td>
<td>through the darkness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O Sterne, Sterne,</td>
<td>Oh Stars, Stars,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mond and Sonne</td>
<td>Moon and Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grüne Erde!</td>
<td>Green Earth!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2.8. Excerpt and translation following “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” from “Die Liebenden” in Die Freude.*

One might contend that the following line is overtly sexual: “Let it drip into the heart, into the golden honeycomb, and fill’eth it to the brim. Alas, already it drips over, blessed and to the end, imbued with everlasting sweetness”; however, an erotic interpretation is contradictory with Jone’s religious reputation. Furthermore, there is biblical precedence for using this kind of imagery as a metaphor for God’s love in Psalm 23:5, “Thou preparest a table before me in the

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46 Ibid., 18. Translation is my own.
presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oyle; my cuppe runneth over.”

Overflowing here refers to being complete, or having all of one’s needs met leading to the cessation of suffering or paradise. “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” is a celebration of life, but unlike “Wie bin ich froh,” it is a celebration of an eternal spiritual life.

A comprehensive view of these poems suggests a program that can only be understood by looking at op. 25 as a complete work in three movements.\(^48\) An example of how isolating these poems from their context in op. 25 can produce an alternative interpretation is found in Christopher Wintle’s excellent article titled “Webern’s Lyric Character.”\(^49\) Wintle provides a literal interpretation of “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” and mentions the discrepancies between it and the performance translation but ultimately characterizes “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” in the following way:

The poem’s metaphorical world is formed from those objects in nature (Webern’s lifelong love) that offer the least threat: stars, bees, honey-combs. Hence its eroticism is solitary, or at least without challenge. Even more, its psycho-sexual climax, the ‘filling to the brim’ which is matched by over-flowing music, pinpoints Webern’s predilection for the ‘ecstasy’ described by [Erwin] Stein.\(^50\)

With “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” isolated and removed from the context of the first two songs, Wintle’s interpretation is reasonable; however, I have demonstrated that this conclusion is contrary to Jone’s reputation as a Catholic and to the function of “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” in op. 25. With the text having revealed a possible three-part program about life, death, and

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\(^{48}\) The question of why he composed them in a different order is addressed in chapter 3.

\(^{49}\) Wintle, “Webern’s Lyric Character,” 229-263.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., 238. “Ecstasy” is in reference to Erwin Stein’s article in which he describes the impact of Webern’s death: “The death of Anton Webern has deprived the musical world of a rare personality. He was an uncompromising character, tenaciously pursuing his musical ideals. Ecstasy was his natural state of mind: his compositions should be understood as musical visions.” See Erwin Stein, “Anton Webern,” *The Musical Times* 87, no. 1235 (Jan. 1946): 14-15.
resurrection, it can also be seen that Webern was thinking on a larger scale than what has been previously realized. If this were Webern’s intention then evidence should exist in his background and in the music of op. 25.

2.5 Webern’s Interpretation

Although Webern was raised Catholic and considered himself as such, Moldenhauer claims his spirituality “stood above dogma.”51 For example, Webern attended Mass regularly but he never participated in communion, and he rejected the clergy’s role as “intermediary” in spiritual matters as well as the practice of confession. Webern firmly believed that spirituality and communion with God happened in nature, directly between man and God.52 Webern’s affinity for nature is evidenced in his writings. Composing in Preglhof, his family’s country estate, and hiking with his son Peter were two of Webern’s favorite pastimes.53 Considering this, it becomes clear why Jone’s poetry nature coupled with the heavy use of color and symbolism had immense appeal for Webern.

Jone’s language in “Wie bin ich froh!” describes a bright green that envelopes a world overflowing with blooming flowers. It is the same kind of language and feeling that can be seen in Webern’s diary as far back as the spring of 1905 when he wrote, “We had walked all day, again through the fresh green of fields and meadows, through fragrant forests, past quiet villages and dreaming mills. And the sun’s shining radiance above everything!”54 Webern goes on to

51 Ibid., 355.
54 Ibid., 78.
say, “We wandered through forests. It was a fairyland! High tree trunks all around us, a green luminescence in between, and here and there floods of gold on the green moss.”

Recall that death is the principal meaning of the second song, “Des Herzens Purpurvogel.” Webern’s lifelong preoccupation with death began after his mother, Amalie, lost a seven-year battle with diabetes in 1906. After the tragic passing of his nephew in 1913, Webern found consolation in the writings of Emmanuel Swedenborg, writings that addressed the subjects of death and life after death, subjects which Webern gave considerable attention throughout his life. Swedenborg’s influence can be found in Webern’s only stage work, _Tot, sechs Bilder für die Bühne_ (Dead, Six scenes for the stage), which quotes an extensive passage from Swedenborg’s _Vera Religio_, eventually drawing criticism from Schoenberg for doing so. Two themes found in Swedenborg’s Heaven and Hell resonate with Webern’s character. We can see Swedenborg’s belief the natural world was united with the spirit world as opposed to the material world. It is noteworthy that in Swedenborg’s writings he often makes references to grass and earth or to bees and honey. Swedenborg also sometimes refers to flowers as angels. Whether Jone was familiar with this particular symbolism or if it influenced her poetry is difficult to ascertain, but it seems that Webern was profoundly influenced by some key elements in Swedenborg’s philosophy.

Another important figure for both Jone and Webern was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Two works by Goethe, _Versuch die Metamorphose der Pflanzen zu erklären_ and _Zur_

55 Ibid.
56 Johnson, _Webern and the Transformation of Nature_, 78. Swedenborg was an eighteenth-century philosopher who wrote extensively about the spirituality, nature, and the afterlife, all of which were sentimental of Webern’s throughout his entire life.
57 Moldenhauer, _Anton von Webern: A Chronicle of His Life and Work_, 203.
58 Webern’s op. 19 is a choral setting of two poems, 1) “Weiß wie Lilien, reine Kerzen,” and 2) “Ziehn die Schafe von der Wiese,” taken from Goethe’s _Chinesisch-deutsche Jahres-und Tageszeiten_ (1827). Webern also used Goethe’s “Gleich und Gleich,” (1917) for the fourth song in his op. 12.
Farbenlehre, were particularly influential for Webern.\(^59\) Webern received his copy of Farbenlehre as a gift from Berg in the spring of 1929. In September of that year Webern wrote to Berg and proclaimed the Farbenlehre “the most sublime book of all time.”\(^60\) Webern was able to identify with Goethe on many levels because they shared the same basic philosophy, that “the wedding of nature’s beauty to scientific principles was the magic key to the essence of art.”\(^61\) Apart from spiritualism mixed with Natursgefühl, another reason that Jone’s poetry appealed to Webern was that he “found in her [Jone’s] poems the realization of Farbenlehre, the fusion of all the philosophical tenets in which he had always believed.”\(^62\) Color plays such a prominent part in the op. 25 excerpts that it is conceivable that Webern also selected them over other similar excerpts, in part, because of their color schemes.

From 1914 to 1926 Webern wrote only vocal music. Julian Johnson points that Webern’s sketches for four of the seven instrumental works written after that period contain extramusical material.\(^63\) He claims that Webern was fond of musical programs:

Webern’s preoccupation with the ABA ternary form is evident on virtually every level of musical structure. It might well suggest a tendency to rework the same concerns over and over again, both within individual movements and between them, as well as between separate pieces but there is considerable evidence to suggest that these concerns were by no means simply technical ones. Indeed, the preserved extra-musical \([sic]\) outlines make it clear that his use of ternary form was bound up with some quite specific programmatic associations.\(^64\)

Not only does this concept apply to separate pieces, it can also apply to an entire multi-movement work or song cycle. The research and analysis in this study confirm the following

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\(^{59}\) Ibid., 427. *Versuch die Metamorphose der Pflanzen zu erklären* is discussed in chapter 3.


\(^{61}\) Ibid., 318.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 427.

\(^{63}\) According to Johnson, opp. 21, 22, 24, and 28, have some sort extramusical outline at the beginning of their respective manuscripts; see 186.

quote by Johnson. “[I]n Webern a tripartite structure delineates an essentially transformative process … his [Webern’s] understanding of death and spiritual rebirth hinged on the mysterious transformation of the material into the spiritual, a [Swedenborgian] theme on which he dwelt for many years after his mother’s death.”

Johnson also claims that “Jone’s texts spell out what was already a central aspect of Webern’s music—a concern with mirror, the inward process of transformation.” Although the evidence Johnson offers for statement is thin this explains perfectly the circumstances of op. 25. As for Webern, it can be said that he has carefully chosen these poems for their spiritual implications, romantic ideals, and because they had a deep and personal meaning for him.

2.6 Conclusion

As is discussed in the next chapter, comprehensibility and unity demand that something about this idea manifest itself in a significant way, otherwise it would be contrary to the principles of comprehensibility and unity. The most logical place for Webern to realize this is in the form. If a spiritual life is a variation of a corporeal life, then it stands to reason that the third song is a variation of the first. See Figure 2.9.

(A) “Wie bin ich froh!” - physical, corporeal life
(B) “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” - death, corporeal transcendence
(A₁) “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” - spiritual afterlife

Figure 2.9. Ternary form A-B-A₁, created by all three songs when viewed as individual movements of a larger work.

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65 Ibid., 176.
66 Ibid., 177.
In the following chapters, there is evidence that Webern also considered the ternary form of Figure 2.9 to exhibit binary symmetry. Recall that “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” exhibited an enclosed rhyme scheme, a-b-b-a; a-b-b-a, in the form of two quatrains. Figure 2.10 shows how a binary division can be derived from the ternary form created by these excerpts.

![Figure 2.10](image.png)

*Figure 2.10. Possible binary symmetry within a ternary form based on binary division of the individual poems.*

Although it is unusual to talk about ternary forms exhibiting binary symmetry this is likely how Webern interpreted it based on what happens in the music. From an abstract point of view the return of A as a variation (A₁) causes both the ternary and binary divisions to be variations. Figure 2.11 shows the ternary division in red and the binary division in blue, with the variations with a dotted line in black.

![Figure 2.11](image.png)

*Figure 2.11. Ternary and binary dichotomy inherent in the selected excerpts of the op. 25 text.*

If Webern intentionally used the poetry as a program to ensure comprehensibility and unity, then it stands to reason he exploits this 3/2 dichotomy as well as the form A-B-A₁, or life, death, and resurrection on many different levels. The following chapters demonstrate how the construction of the op. 25 song cycle is based on the program’s characteristics of 3/2, beginning with the row.
3.1 Comprehensibility and Unity

To understand how Jone’s text influenced Webern’s compositional process requires an alternate view of op. 25, one outside the scope of traditional twelve-tone and serial analysis. This will first require a discussion of Webern’s concept of comprehensibility. In the published lectures of Anton Webern, comprehensibility [Fasslichkeit] is mentioned no less than twenty-one times.67 On March 7, 1933, Webern stressed that comprehensibility takes precedence over everything: “The highest principle in all presentations of an idea is the law of comprehensibility. Clearly this must be the supreme law.”68 Moreover, unity informs and enhances comprehensibility in his thinking, “Composition with twelve notes has achieved a degree of complete unity that was not even approximately there before. It is clear that where relatedness and unity are omnipresent, comprehensibility is also guaranteed.”69 Webern’s position was influenced by his teacher Arnold Schoenberg, who also claimed that “composition with twelve-tones has no other aim than comprehensibility.”70 Together, these three statements raise the question, what exactly is meant by comprehensibility?

Comprehensibility is defined as “the ability to be understood” or “intelligibility,” but for the purposes of this study a better definition is required.71 Although Webern held it in such high regard, he never provided any specific conditions that constituted comprehensibility; however,

68 Ibid., 16.
69 Ibid., 17.
Schoenberg’s writings on twelve-tone music specify the conditions necessary to constitute comprehensibility. He emphasizes that the composer “must find, if not laws or rules, at least ways to justify the dissonant character of these harmonies and their successions.” These laws or ways are important because they confirm that a system or overriding principle is in effect for the composer. Schoenberg also claims that “artistic value demands comprehensibility, not only for intellectual, but for emotional satisfaction . . . comprehensibility in music is dependent on coherence [i.e. logical consistency]” but that “coherence does not guarantee comprehensibility.” Further clarifying, he states that comprehensibility is defined by the conditions that will “allow the listener to grasp the whole” and also includes “connections inaccessible to consciousness.” The fundamental conditions necessary to determine comprehensibility can be deduced from these statements into three basic premises, they are as follows: 1) coherence - logical consistency, 2) intellectual/emotional satisfaction - resolution, and 3) grasping the whole - Gestalt.

Musical comprehensibility falls into two categories: 1) audible comprehensibility, everything the listener is able to perceive both consciously and subconsciously, such as rhythm, range, dynamics, tempo, and motive; and 2) cognitive or intellectual comprehensibility, the written aspects of the music, including the text setting and esoteric connections that are made in the score. Because comprehensibility is unique to every twelve-tone piece, op. 25 requires a custom analytical system be created specifically for it. To accomplish this I used two concepts.

72 Schoenberg, “Composition with Twelve-Tones,” 207.
74 Ibid.
central to Webern’s understanding of comprehensibility, Schoenberg’s *Grundgestalt* and Goethe’s *Urpflanze*.

In his lectures of 1932, Webern spoke of music composition as it related to Goethe’s theory of the *Urpflanze*, a kind of archetypal plant. Webern said, “Goethe's primeval plant [is a plant in which] the root is in fact no different from the stalk, the stalk no different from the leaf, and the leaf no different from the flower: [they are all] variations of the same idea.”\(^{75}\) Regarding Webern’s Goethean citation, Julian Johnson observes, “This is perhaps the most familiar association of Webern's music with nature, by which Goethe’s organic image serves as the paradigm for Webern’s ideal of a total unity through complete interrelation of the material—an equivalence of Schoenbergian *Grundgestalt* and Goethean *Urpflanze*.\(^{76}\) The central issue of Julian Johnson’s assertion is that the *Urpflanze* is Webern’s organic conceptualization of unity; however, Johnson’s characterization of *Grundgestalt* as the “Schoenbergian equivalent” to the *Urpflanze* is ambiguous and can be better defined as it applies to Webern.

The concept of *Grundgestalt* is such that needs to be defined by the piece to which it applies. Still, it is helpful to see the possibilities of *Grundgestalt* in order to clarify that it is does not have to be just one principle but that it can be a combination of principles. Neither Webern nor Schoenberg directly defined *Grundgestalt*, and for Schoenberg it can be shown that his concept of it evolved over time. That said, a few select quotes from the writings of Schoenberg and Graham Phipps can help provide a fundamental understanding of the function of *Grundgestalt*.

Schoenberg characterizes *Grundgestalt* as follows: “Whatever happens in a piece of music is the endless reshaping of the basic shape … There is nothing in a piece of music but

\(^{75}\) Webern, *The Path to New Music*, 52.

what comes from the theme, springs from it and can be traced back to it; to put it still more severely, nothing but the theme itself.”  

In this statement Schoenberg is speaking in general terms about the function of Grundgestalt and that it represents a motive, or theme, out of which the entire piece is generated. Phipps divides the function of Grundgestalt into two types of musical compositions. First is the type that “presents a complete musical thought which becomes the basis of the work.” The second type is where “the opening bars contain glimpses of musical thought which will gradually unfold and which will be stated in its entirety at a later point in the composition.” These statements show that Grundgestalt is not only the reshaping of the basic shape, but it can also serve as the basis for the overall form. In other words, comprehensibility depends on the composition’s ability to explain itself to the serious listener.

3.2 Dynamic Symmetry

Before moving on to the characteristics of the row, the term symmetry needs to be defined as it applies to op. 25. Webern’s use of symmetry is largely based on pitch collections, register and timbre shifts, and his use of aggregate completion as a structural determinant. In his op. 24, Webern uses the Latin acrostic, sator arepo tenet opera rotas, to create unity and symmetry but this would cause him “considerable difficulties.” Typically he composed a multi-movement work in one year’s time or less, but for op. 24 three years would pass before he

79 Ibid., 5. As is shown in chapter 4, op. 25 falls under the first type of musical composition.
81 Bailey, Symmetry as Nemesis, 1.
completed the first movement. By contrast, the second and third movements were started and finished in less than one month combined.

As was mentioned in chapter 2, Webern began the op. 25 while taking a break from composing op. 24. During this break “Wie bin ich froh” was completed in only twelve days (July 4-16th). Considering that it took Webern three years to write the first movement with the acrostic, it seems unlikely he would have used the same set of organizing principles for op. 25 that he did for op. 24. Given Webern’s love of nature and his own account of Goethe’s Urpflanze, it is reasonable to suggest that he used symmetry he observed in nature as a model. Nature is replete with examples that are both dynamic and symmetrical like the conical shaped Douglas fir tree or the maple seed (Ahorn samen).82 This type of symmetry can be adequately defined as variant or dynamic symmetry.83

This kind of symmetry allows for variation once the initial motive has passed the axis of symmetry. This causes temporality to have a constant entropic or generative effect based around the local axis.84 From this viewpoint Webern is unencumbered by the limitations of strict counterpoint or the rigidity of an acrostic and free to create unity with variation. Although the term “symmetrical” implies two perfect halves, this is a narrow definition which does not

82 From a distance they exhibit near perfect symmetry but the closer one gets the more variation appears between halves.
83 From an art history perspective the term dynamic symmetry was coined by Jay Hambidge in his book Dynamic Symmetry: The Greek Vase (Yale University, 1920). His definition of dynamic is based on a particular definition of the word “dynamics,” meaning “the forces or properties that stimulate growth, development, or change within a system or process.”(Oxford Dictionaries.com, s.v.v. “Dynamics,” accessed March 6, 2013.) Hambidge builds on the fact that nature exhibits characteristics that can be explained using the Fibonacci sequence mathematical constants such as phi, Ø=1.618… (Dynamic Symmetry: The Greek Vase, 11). He then uses these ratios to show how they ratios influenced the creation of ancient Greek vases (ibid., 45). This could also be described as recursive symmetry.
necessarily apply to Webern’s music. The following figures will show how scholars in the past have glossed over important features in his use of local or surface symmetry.

Kathryn Bailey discusses the first movement of the op. 27, Variationen. She identifies it as being composed with the use of canons and palindromes. One passage that is cited as exhibiting perfect symmetry is the palindrome from the opening measures; however, it is not exactly perfect. The order of the row and presentation is reversed at the axis in m. 4, but a closer examination shows that Webern repeats the rhythms of the first half of this passage in the second half. This is why the first G♯ on beat one of m. 4 is a sixteenth-note, and the second G♯ on beat three is an eighth-note (two sixteenth-notes tied across the bar line). What Webern has done is create a variation out of the so-called mirror image by repeating the rhythmic structure of mm. 1-4 beginning with the anacrusis to mm. 5-7. In Example 3.1 the palindromic symmetry is shown in red and the rhythmic repetition is shown in black.

Example 3.1. Op. 27, no. 1, palindrome in mm. 1-7, rhythmic structure repeated, not mirrored.

85 Bailey, Twelve-Note Music of Anton Webern. 109. Bailey says the symmetry in mm. 19-36 is perfect with the exception of mm. 30 and 32, which are “not exactly the same rhythmically,” implying that mm. 1-7 and 37-43 are rhythmically exact. 424, (n. 17). To the contrary, not one single phrase is perfectly symmetrical in the first movement. Bailey also argues that the first two movements of op. 27 are not based on traditional variation forms or principles, and that only the last movement can be labeled a variation. Instead of limiting variation technique to the last movement of op. 27, Webern’s capacity to develop other means of variation within a more traditional binary or ternary form should be considered.

86 The same procedure happens in mm. 37-43.
For this pattern to be perfectly symmetrical it would have to be written as it is in Example 3.2.

Example 3.2. Op. 27, no. 1, palindrome in mm. 1-7, re-written as a perfect mirror structure for contrast.

The next two examples show how Webern develops the ideas presented in these first few measures. Note that these kinds of procedures will also be found in op. 25, only not as precise. The next symmetrical phrase in op. 27 happens in mm. 8-10 and functions in a similar way to the first seven measures. Measure 8 begins with the two note verticality, F♯ and F♮, which has its symmetrical complement on beat three of m. 10. Webern intentionally obscures the axis of symmetry in this phrase by introducing the A♮-D♯-G♯ as a three-note verticality in the left hand on beat two of m. 9 instead of D♮-G♯-C♯ on beat three. This situation creates a variation of the repetitive rhythmic structure in the opening phrase by repeating the interval structure in m. 9, shown with black arrows in Example 3.3.

Example 3.3. Op. 27, no.1, symmetry in mm. 8-10, (m. 9 as a variation of mm. 1-7).
Measures 11-15 would have exhibited perfect symmetry but Webern uses the axis of symmetry to change the hand in which the symmetry continues. This is similar to mm. 1-7 where Webern continued the row in the opposite hand after the axis. Example 3.4 shows how the phrase begins in the right hand and is continued in the left hand (shown in red), and how the left hand is continued in the right (shown in blue).

Example 3.4. Op. 27, no. 1, mm. 11-15. Symmetrical motive changes hands after the axis.

The final example from op. 27 is the fourth symmetrical phrase in mm. 16-18 (w/anacrusis). Example 3.5 demonstrates how Webern has shifted the axis and created a variation of mm. 8-10 (Example 3.3).

Example 3.5. Op. 27, no.1, mm. 16-18 w/anacrusis-shifted axis (mm. 8-10).

Webern also used dynamic symmetry to construct his tone-rows as is seen in the second movement of his op. 29, Cantata I. In m. 6, Webern presents the primary row in which the middle tetrachord sets the words *Ahorn samen* with the Bach motive, $B_\flat - A^\natural_C - B^\natural$, transposed
up a perfect-fifth to, F♮-E♮-G♮-F♯. Even though the outer tetrachords of this row are in retrograde inversion and the rhythm has been slightly altered, the visual symmetry in Example 3.6 is clear.

Example 3.6. Measures 6-10 of Cantata I, op. 29, 2nd mvt. Presentation of the primary row.

Dynamic symmetry is fundamental to understanding how Webern creates unity in op. 25. It is important keep in mind that sometimes Webern repeats the interval or rhythmic structure where one might expect to find a mirror image. Because it was written a few years before opp. 27 and 29 the dynamic symmetry found in op. 25 reflects a more developmental stage of this technique. The symmetrical patterns, however, can be seen with a simple reduction.

The remainder of this chapter focuses on the Grundgestalt in the prime row of op. 25.

3.3 Characteristics of the Row

Although op. 25 is not the last vocal piece Webern wrote, it is the last song cycle, and as such it represents a highly developed twelve-tone style of a mature composer. Yet the usage of the row in terms of permutational development is relatively simple compared with other twelve-tone vocal works written during this period. This deviation suggests that Webern was confident

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87 In German, Webern’s native language, B♭ is represented with an H.
in his ability to generate material from a minimum of resources, which, depending on one’s viewpoint, either frees him up or forces him to create unity and comprehensibility in other ways.

The first twelve pitches of the opening vocal line in m. 2 constitute the primary row [henceforth P0]. Example 3.7 shows the pitch levels at which P0 was originally presented. Webern used the same primary row for all three songs.

Example 3.7. P0 of “Wie bin ich froh,” the same order and octave as presented in mm. 2-5.

The matrix of row forms for op. 25 is as follows in Example 3.8.88

Example 3.8. Matrix for op. 25.

Bailey has provided tone-row analyses for all of Webern’s twelve-tone music; therefore, this study’s focus is on the initial statement and internal characteristics of P0.89 P0 is a

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88 The trend has been to label the prime row after its starting pitch class; however, for this paper I use the more traditional method which sets the starting pitch to 0 regardless of pitch class. This helps show the row relationships.

symmetrical row and can be split into two hexachords with identical Forte numbers. Example 3.9 shows how these two hexachords are inversions of one another.

Example 3.9. P0’s two symmetrical hexachords, the second is an inversion of the first.

In his row analysis of “Wie bin ich froh,” Joseph Straus points out the repeated use of set class (014) and how it relates to pitch class 7 by perfect fourth. Straus’s figure is recreated in Example 3.10.

Example 3.10. Straus’s internal analysis of P0 “Wie bin ich froh.”

There is, however, an alternative reading that uses the text for segmenting P0 based on syllables, phrasing, and rhythmic grouping. Example 3.11 shows these segmentations and demonstrates how they can be used to determine individual set class.

Example 3.11. Soprano line from “Wie bin ich froh,” mm. 2-5. Segmentation, phrasing, and rhythmic setting.

90 Straus, Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory, 24.
The symmetry found in these segmentations is also reflected by the number of pitches in the individual set classes and the number of syllables in the associated text. Because of this symmetry there is a contraction (liquidation) and expansion (reconstitution) of the set class, one pitch at a time. Liquidation here means that every time a new set class is presented it has one less note.91 Likewise, reconstitution means that every new set class has gained an extra note. Notice the 4-3-2-3-4 pattern in Example 3.12.

Example 3.12. “Wie bin ich froh,” mm. 2-5. Liquidation and reconstitution of the number of pitches per set class based on the text and rhythmic segmentation of Example 3.11.

When these segments are written as simultaneous verticalities, the first presentation of P0 reveals a fundamental bass line.92 The pitches for each set are in a series of nearly identical verticalities whose lowest sounding tones are: E♭-D♭-B♭-A♭. From the lowest sounding tone

91 In her dissertation “Lessons of Arnold Schoenberg in Teaching the Musikalische Gedanke,” Colleen Conlon points out that “for Schoenberg, variation, transition, transformation, and the process of liquidation and neutralization leading to structural points defined elements of the Grundgestalt that, in turn, serve to connect themes melodically and harmonically in support of the musical Gedanke” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Texas, 2009), 7.

92 Webern would have been thoroughly familiar with the concept of fundamental bass through Schoenberg. Schoenberg derives his interpretation of fundamental bass directly from Simon Sechter, who in turn developed a comprehensive view of fundamental from the 18th century theorists Kirnberger and Marpurg. (Graham Phipps, “Simon Sechter’s Fundamental Bass Theory as a Guide to the Compositional Practice of Anton Bruckner. An Assessment of Frederick Stocken’s Recent Study” *Theoria* 17 (2010), 113). The source for these German writers was Jean-Philippe Rameau. Schoenberg codifies this theory in his *Harmonielehre* (1911) where he says, “The primitive ear hears the tone as irreducible, but physics recognizes it to be complex. In the meantime, however, musicians discovered that it is capable of continuation, i. e. that movement is latent within it. That problems are concealed in it, problems that clash with one another, that the tone lives and seeks to propagate itself.” (Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, 313.)
upward, these verticalities consist of one or more of the following: 1) a major seventh, 2) a major seventh with a minor third, or 3) a major ninth with a major seventh, and a minor third. The fifth set accompanying the text “und leuchtet so” is a repetition of the first set, for the sake of consistency it is stacked identically to the first set with $E^\flat$ as the lowest sounding tone. See Example 3.13.

![Example 3.13. “Wie bin ich froh,” mm. 3-5. Fundamental bass created by the lowest sounding pitch in the collection of the (014) set class (or variations thereof).](image)

These fundamental bass tones are relatable by perfect-fifth: $D^\flat-A^\flat-E^\flat-B^\flat$. Webern intentionally built perfect-fifth relationships into $P_0$. Whether or not he is thinking in tonal terms is beside the point. What is important is that he uses the perfect-fifth to govern other relationships more related to symmetry. Webern’s handwritten row tables consisted only of the original form $P_0$, and its transposition $P_5$. Both prime rows are shown with four different permutations: $P_0$, $I_0$, $R_0$, $R_1$ and $P_5$, $I_5$, $R_5$, $R_5$. The transposed row appears only in the

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93 Graham Phipps has demonstrated how Webern's rows also outline tertian sonorities. Thus, for example, in the op. 30 Variations the first and last tetrachord of the prime row form 0,1,3,4 sets, which in Webern's disposition outline a bass tone with minor third, major seventh, and major ninth above. Placing the first and last tetrachords in adjacent position, as Webern does in his “theme,” produces identical verticalities at the interval of a perfect fifth; in the first variation, as Phipps demonstrates, Webern's mapping technique produces a series of this “tertian” sonority moving by perfect fifth. Similarly, the middle tetrachord in Webern's prime row for his op. 30 forms a 0,3,4,7 set, which may be understood as root, perfect-fifth and simultaneous major and minor-thirds. In his second variation, Webern's mapping technique produces a series of perfect fifth motions with this “tertian” sonority. As documented in Phipps' study, both of these sonorities are common to non-serial composers contemporary to Webern—Stravinsky, Hindemith, Bartók as Examples. See Graham H. Phipps, “Harmony as a Determinant of Structure in Webern’s Variations for Orchestra,” Music Theory and the Exploration of the Past, ed. Christopher Hatch and David W. Bernstein (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 473-504.

second song, “Des Herzens Purpurvogel.” In his original row table Webern had written “Unter Quint” and “2. Lied” next to the transposed row, P5. Songs 1 and 3 use only P0 and its permutations. Hence, one may describe op. 25 in terms of arch form with musical characteristics of symmetry and perfect-fifth relations, i.e. P0-P5-P0.

By constructing the row as two symmetrical hexachords and then repeating the first four notes of the row (three at different pitch levels), Webern has created a ternary structure with overlapping binary divisions. Example 3.14 shows the hexachord symmetry in blue, the phrase symmetry in red, and the ternary division (caused by the repeat of the first tetrachord) in black.

Example 3.14. “Wie bin ich froh,” overlapping binary symmetries inside a ternary structure created by the repeat of the first tetrachord with three notes at different pitch levels.

Also built into the row is the same ternary structure that was created when he selected his text, A-B-A\textsuperscript{1}. These overlapping symmetries nestled within this ternary structure are the key to understanding how Webern composed the first two songs of op. 25.

Inherent in this row and its presentation are five interrelated characteristics that constitute the Grundgestalt. These characteristics manifest throughout op. 25 in the following ways:

1) The overlapping symmetry created by the hexachords and by the phrase. This plays a major part in the accompaniment of the first two songs although it functions in a different manner for each.
2). The symmetry created by the consistent liquidation and reconstitution of the number pitches per set class. This applies specifically to the rhythmic construction in the accompaniment for songs 1 and 2.

3). The bass tones relatable by perfect-fifth, D♮-A♮-E♮-B♮, created by the lowest sounding note found in each segmentation of individual set classes (014) or a variation thereof. This interval is used to govern the tone-row relationship between songs and functions as a marker for an interesting occurrence in “Wie bin ich froh” and “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen.”

4). The A - B - A1 ternary structure created by the repeat of the first tetrachord of P0, which, combined with the binary symmetry, creates a two against three dichotomy. In all three songs there is a constant blending of 2 and 3. In the previous chapter I showed how by the end of the song cycle, there is a fundamental shift from two to three in the form and discussed the meaning behind this.

5). Everything is in constant flux. Remember that when Webern repeats the first tetrachord he does so at different pitch levels for three of the notes thus creating a variation. The concept of developing variation is extremely important in op. 25. The term was coined by Schoenberg while discussing the merits of Brahms’s music over that of Wagner. He states, “Brahms repeated phrases, motives, and other structural ingredients of themes only in varied forms, if possible, in the form of developing variation.” This is not in reference to variation form but to the constant development of the motive through repetition. On the surface of op. 25, the eighteenth and nineteenth-century rhetorical devices of gradual development and transformation of material through repetition are gone. Instead, Webern retains the spirit of this

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idea through an accelerated process, an almost hyper-Brahmsian treatment of motivic transformation, that creates a series dramatically altered ideas one after another, but still relatable to one another by the *Grundgestalt.*
CHAPTER 4

MUSIC ANALYSIS OF OP. 25

This chapter consists of an analysis of op. 25. All three songs are analyzed in the order in which they were published. The analytical strategy for each song will be to examine: 1) the form, 2) text setting, and 3) the accompaniment.

4.1 “Wie bin ich froh”

4.1.1 Form

In Jone’s original publication of this text she had organized it into two quatrains, each containing two verses. Webern follows Jone’s form and creates two stanzas each containing two verses.98 See Example 4.1.

A introduction m. 1 w/anacrusis

stanza 1 (verse 1 & 2) mm. 2-5 w/anacrusis

B transition mm. 6 w/anacrusis (variation of introduction)

stanza 2 (verse 3 & 4) mm. 6-11

codetta m. 12

Figure 4.1. Form of “Wie bin ich froh,” in op. 25.

“Wie bin ich froh” is the only song of op. 25 to change meter. The score shows twelve measures alternating between 3/4 and 4/4. The opening piano gesture sounds like an anacrusis, but the accent is displaced. The goal of the rhythmic trajectory in this opening gesture makes the four-note verticality sound like the downbeat of m. 1; however, it comes on the second eighth-

98 Ternary aspects of this form are discussed later in this chapter.
note of beat 1 thereby undermining the natural accent at the beginning of the measure. See Example 4.1.

Example 4.1. Measure 1 w/anacrusis, four-note verticality not on the downbeat.

Typically, the final measure accounts for the anacrusis. Example 4.2 shows that Webern ends, rather, in 4/4 which leaves a quarter-note rest at the end of the final measure.

Example 4.2. “Wie bin ich froh” m. 12 rest on beat 4.

It is possible that Webern wanted that rest for performance purposes but he could have included it and still accounted for the anacrusis. It is likely that he included it for the following reason. The meter changes exhibit a ternary division within a binary substructure. This mirrors Webern’s construction and presentation of the row, and reflects the binary and ternary characteristics of Jone’s text. The binary aspect of Figure 4.2 is slightly offset but the ternary division is perfect; this demonstrates the duality in the metric construction of “Wie bin ich froh.”
4.1.2 Text Setting

Webern’s use of symmetry is also seen in the vocal part. By isolating these lines the use of parallel and contrasting motion becomes clearly visible. See Example 4.3.

\begin{example}
(a) Contrasting and parallel motion between verse 2-m. 6 and verse 3-m. 9 w/anacrusis. (b) Contrasting and parallel motion between verse 1-m. 2 and verse 2-m. 6. Webern has created three equal-length phrases roughly based around the word noch.

A closer examination of the word noch shows that in m. 3, directly following the phrase, noch einmal (once again), Webern utilizes the Bach motive, B♭ -A♭-C♯-B♯, which is transposed.
down a perfect-fifth and spelled vertically, E♭ - D♯ - F♮ - E♭. In m. 9, following the same text, noch einmal, Webern uses the Bach motive again. This time it is spelled literally, B♭ - A♯ - C♯ - B♭*, as seen in Example 4.4.

Example 4.4. Transposed Bach motives, m. 3 and m. 9 of “Wie bin ich froh.”

The word noch is also repeated in m. 6, but einmal does not appear this time which has an effect on the Bach motive. Notice in Example 4.5 that Webern gives a false Bach motive by altering one note; he would have had to use C♯ instead of C♮ to make it complete.

Example 4.5. False Bach motive in m. 6 of “Wie bin ich froh.”
It is not surprising to find the Bach motive in this way. Webern had previously used similar vertical references in his saxophone quartet, op. 22. See Example 4.6.

Example 4.6. Bach motive in Webern’s op. 22, mvmt. 2, mm. 102-3.

Furthermore, the Bach motive can also be seen in the opening measures of Schoenberg’s opera Moses und Aron (1932). See Example 4.7.


99 The Bach motive in m.102 of the second movement of Webern’s op. 22 was pointed out to me by Graham Phipps. The Bach motive in m. 1 of Schoenberg’s Moses und Aron is also discussed by Graham Phipps in a paper titled “Musical Structure: Quotation, Revision, Influence in mid-20th-Century Music,” presented at the Fourth Conference on Interdisciplinary Musicology (CIM08), Thessaloniki, Greece, 2-6 July 2008.
While Webern was composing op. 25 he is also known to have been arranging a ricercar from Bach’s *Das Musikaliches Opfer* for small orchestra. Evidence of Webern’s work on the Bach ricercar is found in a letter to Hildegard Jone dated November 9, 1934. In this letter Webern states that he is nearly finished composing the op. 25, then the following morning he writes Jone again and mentions that he is working on the Bach fugue every day.\(^{100}\) Interest in Bach’s compositional process, which relies heavily on the perfect-fifth, may help to explain why Webern made use of this interval in the transposition of the vertical Bach motive.\(^{101}\)

There is another perfect-fifth transposition in m. 1, on the four note verticality spelled, \(\text{A}^\natural-\text{G}^\natural-\text{C}^\#-\text{C}^\natural\) (0145), and in m. 5 it is spelled, \(\text{D}^\natural-\text{C}^\#-\text{F}^\#-\text{F}^\natural\) (0145). See Example 4.8.

![Example 4.8. Perfect-fifth transposition of set class (0145) in m. 1 and m. 5 of “Wie bin ich froh.”](image)

One notable use of tone painting occurs in m. 2 where Webern sounds a \(\text{B}^\flat\) major and \(\text{B}^\natural\) major triad simultaneously. This situation will come back in a subtle but significant way in song 3, “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen.” It is important keep in mind that Webern is associating this particular verticality with the word *froh* and that of all the four note verticalities in “Wie bin

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\(^{100}\) Webern, *Letters to Hildegard Jone and Josef Humplik*, 28.

\(^{101}\) Other reasons for this fifth transposition are discussed in chapters 4.3 and 5.
ich froh,” this one has no complement, transposition, or variation of itself. See Example 4.9 for the verticality accompanying the words *ich froh* (I am happy).

![Example 4.9. B♭ and B♭ major triad on the words ich froh in “Wie bin ich froh.”](image)

**Example 4.9.** B♭ and B♭ major triad on the words ich froh in “Wie bin ich froh.”

4.1.3 Accompaniment

In his analysis of “Wie bin ich froh,” Joseph Straus claims that the rhythm “lacks a steady meter” and does not follow a “strict pattern.” Contrary to Straus’s view, the meter can be seen as symmetrical and steady while following a relatively strict pattern. The rhythm in the accompaniment unfolds in two ways: 1) through visually symmetrical rhythms, and 2) through a process of rhythmic liquidation. Both of these techniques will use variation to some degree.

Webern begins the introduction with the rhythmic motive used throughout “Wie bin ich froh.” This motive is three triplet sixteenth-notes, two eighth-notes, and one quarter-note. After introducing it, Webern uses symmetry to repeat the motive in m. 2. By doing this Webern creates two overlapping symmetries. Example 4.10 shows the primary symmetry in red and the secondary symmetry in blue.

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103 Recall the overlapping symmetries created by the first tetrachord, P0.
Example 4.10. Measure 1-2 with anacrusis, overlapping symmetry from the introduction.

Example 4.13 establishes a consistent pattern of liquidation by outlining every repetition of the rhythmic motive from the first measure and its anacrusis. After the initial statement of the main rhythmic motive in m.1, Webern uses two eighth notes which act as a link to the next statement of the rhythmic motive. After this second statement Webern begins to liquidate it in a relatively strict manner. See Example 4.11.

Example 4.11. “Wie bin ich froh,” mm. 1-5, rhythmic liquidation in the accompaniment.

After the liquidation is finished the absence of the accompaniment creates a type of text painting. See how the lyrics “und leuchtet so” (and lights up so) in Example 4.12 are unaccompanied so they can clearly be heard as if a light has been shone on them.
Example 4.12. Tone panting on “und leuchtet so.”

Webern uses a variation of mm. 1 and 2 as a transition to the second stanza. Example 4.13 shows the primary axis of this symmetry in red and the secondary axis in blue.

Example 4.13. “Wie bin ich froh,” mm. 5-8, overlapping symmetry in the accompaniment.

The anacrusis to m. 6 is rhythmically identical to the anacrusis for m.1. See Example 4.14.

Example 4.14. Transition in mm. 5-6; compare to m. 1 (Example 4.1).

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104 The verticality A♭-G♯-C♯-B♮ (0135) has one note different from the verticality in m. 1 spelled, A♭-G♯-C♯-C♮ (0145).
The eighth notes that served as a link in m. 1 are now expanded to a quarter-note verticality plus two eighth notes (shown with a dashed square in Example 4.14). Measure 7 restarts the rhythmic liquidation which is then exhausted in the first half of m. 10. The second half of m. 10 begins the liquidation process for the last time. The linking eighth notes (shown with dashed square in Example 4.14) have also been reordered and varied to two eighth-note triplets followed by an eighth-note verticality. See Example 4.15.

Example 4.15. Rhythmic liquidation in the accompaniment mm. 7-10; mm. 10-12.

Although there is a slight inconsistency in the value and placement of the omitted material in the subsequent repetitions, the discrepancy is small enough still to qualify this liquidation process as consistent and regular. The third and last liquidation motive also occurs as a slight variation. With this variation Webern enables one last symmetrical motive. Example 4.16 shows the lesser symmetry with a dotted blue line, and the larger symmetry with a dashed red line. The dotted black line connecting the boxes shows how Webern kept the same rhythmic structure from m. 10 in m. 12. This is similar to the repeating rhythmic structure from mm. 1-7 of op. 27, Variationen (Example 3.1). See Example 4.16.
Example 4.16. Overlapping symmetries mixed with the last rhythmic liquidation in “Wie bin ich froh,” mm. 10-12.

“Wie bin ich froh” is a binary song with ternary characteristics. Webern further emphasizes this by ending the piece with I0. The opening gesture of the piano begins with RI0. The first three pitches of the final row statement, I0, begin in the voice in m. 11, the last nine pitches of I0 are taken over by the piano. By doing this Webern rounds out the form and brings the piece to a close. See Example 4.17.

Figure 4.3. Figure recreated from one of Bailey’s row charts showing the beginning and ending rows are retrogrades of one another.\textsuperscript{105}

4.2 “Des Herzens Purpurvogel”

The principal motives of “Wie bin ich froh” developed in the song 2, “Des Herzen’s Purpurvogel” are: 1) variation and liquidation of rhythm, 2) symmetry, 3) developing binary and ternary concepts, and 4) text painting.

\textsuperscript{105} Bailey, \textit{Twelve-Note Music of Anton Webern}, 349.
Song 2, “Des Herzens Purpurvogel,” is possibly the least studied piece in Webern’s twelve-tone repertoire. In a way, “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” functions similarly to the second movement of a concerto, appearing in the subdominant key. Just as Webern used only P0 and its permutations in “Wie bin ich froh,” all of the row forms in “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” are derived from P5 (i.e. P5, R5, I5, R15). In his original row table’s Webern had written “Unter Quint” and “2. Lied” next to the transposed row; however, Bailey’s reproduction of the table for op. 25 shows that Webern had written the note a fourth above the starting pitch of P0. Example 4.17 shows the starting note of “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” is indeed a fourth above.106

a) “Wie bin ich froh”

b) “Des Herzens Purpurvogel”

Example 4.17. Opening phrase of “Wie bin ich froh” (a) and “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” (b).

In “Wie bin ich froh” Webern called attention to the perfect-fifth with the Bach motives and other vertical verticalities. Now Webern is using the perfect-fifth to dictate the row relationship between songs 1 and 2. This could explain why Webern had decided to write “Unter Quint” instead of “Über Quart.”107

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106 Bailey, Webern Studies, 199.
107 There is also a tritone relationship between these two songs. The very last note heard in the piano in m. 12 of “Wie bin ich froh” is an F♯ and the very first note in the piano for “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” is a C♯.
4.2.1 Form

Jone originally organized the five verses of “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” into an octet with the rhyme scheme: a b b a; a b b a. In chapter 2 this was split into two quatrains to show that Jone had placed three verses in the first quatrain and two verses in the second quatrain. Webern picks up on this idea and subtly changes the distribution of verses by putting verse 1 and 2 in the first half of “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” (mm. 1-20), and then giving verses 3, 4, and 5 to the second half (mm. 21-42). By combining verses 3 and 4 into one stanza he is able to keep the total number of stanzas to four. Again, as a result of Jone’s text, there is a subtle mixing of binary and ternary but this time Webern is able to divide it perfectly in half by placing the transition to stanza 3 in m. 21. See Figure 4.4.

A introduction mm. 1-3
stanza 1, mm. 4-8 w/anacrusis (verse 1)
transition 1, mm. 8-10
stanza 2, mm. 11-20 w/anacrusis (verse 2)

B transition 2, mm. 21-22 w/anacrusis
stanza 3, mm. 23-31 (verse 3 and 4)
transition 3, m. 32
stanza 4, mm. 33-42 w/anacrusis (verse 5)

Figure 4.4. Form of “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” in op. 25.

4.2.2 Text Setting

Webern chose to focus on the five verses instead of Jone’s octet rhyme scheme by calling attention to them with the use of a common rhythmic motive. If they are isolated using Jone’s punctuation they can be seen as continuous variations of one another with a function similar to that of an obligato. Example 4.18 shows that in nearly every instance these verses
begin with a sixteenth-note followed by a longer note with the leap of a sixth or larger in the opposite direction (verse 5 varied with repeating notes).  

Example 4.18. Verse 1-5, identical rhythm in the starting pitches.

Similar to “Wie bin ich froh,” the first verse of “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” acts as a main motive from which the other verses are derived (with the exception of verse 3). The greatest difference between these five verses is that verses 2 and 5 are roughly twice as long as verses 1, 3, and 4. For verses 2 and 5, Webern makes another variation out of their second

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108 The original 1956 Universal Edition score contains a misprint in m. 41. In $3/8$ time, the dot on the second eighth-note causes the measure to have an extra sixteenth-note.
halves. Example 4.19 shows verse 1 compared with the first half of verse 2. Notice how this is in mostly parallel motion. The arrows are meant to show similarities in the rhythm and interval content.

Example 4.19. Verse 1 compared with the first half of verse 2.

Example 4.20 shows verse 1 with the second half of verse 2.

Example 4.20. Verse 1 compared with the second half of verse 2.

Verse 3 is the only one that does not resemble verse 1. Verse 3 is more of a variation of verse 2b. This is not surprising to find; later in this chapter I show that Webern has a habit of varying the third repetition of an idea in this song. Example 4.21 shows the rhythmic and intervallic similarities between verses 2b and 3. Notice the repeated E♭'s on *aus wenn* in verse 2b and *er's der* in verse 3.

Example 4.22 shows how Webern has started the imitation with verse 1 again. This time he mostly uses contrary motion throughout verses 1 and 4 instead of the parallel motion between verses 1 and 2a. See Example 4.22.


Finally, verse 5b is a rhythmic variation of 5a that uses contrary and parallel motion. Both verse 3 and 5 begin with a C♯; this will become important in the third song. Also notice that verse 5 contains three repeated notes due to the way Webern intertwined the row with the accompaniment. See Example 4.23 (repeated notes- C♯ on doch ra-; C♮ on -stet end; E♭, on er am).
Example 4.23. “Des Herzens Purpurvogel,” verse 5a (mm. 32-37) compared to 5b (mm. 38-42).

The accompaniment is similar to “Wie bin ich froh” in that it does not support the melody in a traditional manner (i.e., tonal lieder). There are, however, a few instances where Webern clearly uses text painting and mimics the physical acts of death and transformation. First is the tempo. Measure 1 starts, Fließend, ♩=ca. 112; from here there is a continuous use of “ritardando” and “tempo” until m. 33. In m. 33 Webern presents the text “and it comes to rest on the perch of death” with a new and slower tempo marking, langsamer (slower), ♩=ca. 84. Again in m. 38 Webern writes immer langsamer (more slowly) ♩=ca. 58. This is followed by verlöschen (extinguishing) in m. 41 where Webern also sets the word verbeben (expire or cease twitching). The continuous breakdown and alteration of the rhythmic motives in each of the verses may also represent death or a transformational process.

The accompaniment is also used as a tool for text painting and as a symbol of transformation. For instance, Webern used a short transition in between every verse except 3 and 4. Verse 4 starts with sie ruhen oft, or “they rest often.” If one considers transitions as working to link sections, this could provide Webern to opportunity to have the transition “rest” while simultaneously allowing him to combine two verses into one stanza. Moreover, as the song progresses the accompaniment also becomes heavy. By m. 34 it is visibly sluggish and

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109 The relationship between the voice and accompaniment is discussed in the conclusion of this chapter.
begins to break down. In the following excerpts taken from the beginning, middle, and end of the accompaniment, observe how the texture, in a progressive manner, becomes thick and weighted down, representing a physical death. See Example 4.24.

Example 4.24. “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” accompaniment from mm. 1, 19, and 34.

4.2.3 Accompaniment

In “Wie bin ich froh” Webern blended symmetry, variation, and rhythmic liquidation as a way to define the form and mark the beginnings and ends of phrases; however, in “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” these ideas are separated and exhausted one at time with a slight overlap between sections. The form of “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” creates two perfect halves. In the first half of this song Webern develops the rhythmic motives introduced in mm. 1 and 2. Example 4.25 shows how this rhythm breaks down by the third repetition (marked with an asterisk). In m. 3 the eighth-note is introduced and retained for the 1st variation in m. 4. See Example 4.25.
Example 4.25. “Des Herzens Purpurvogel,” variations in the accompaniment, mm. 1-3 (a); 4-6 (b).

In m. 6, the other sixteenth-notes (from m. 3) have been transformed into eighth-notes, causing a simultaneous verticality on the second beat.\(^{110}\) Measures 7-9 further develop the idea of repeating a rhythmic motive twice and then altering it on the third repetition; however, Webern has reversed the order. He gives the altered version first, then the two repetitions. See Example 4.26.

\(^{110}\) This is a good example of the accelerated development of variation. In m. 6 it would have made sense for Webern to have two eighth notes and two sixteenths and then retain the eighth notes into the next variation in m 7. What Webern gives us instead looks like it has been through four or five repetitions already.

By reversing the order of mm. 7-9 Webern creates a kind of symmetry in the presentation of the rhythmic motives. See Example 4.27.

Example 4.27. Measures 4-6; 7-9, quasi-symmetry created by reversed motive.

Measures 10-12 function as a transition to m. 13. Here Webern combines and varies elements of the first nine measures. He also starts a series of rhythmic liquidations in m. 10 (i.e., the number of notes per measure in m.10, seven notes; in m. 11, six notes; and in m. 12, five notes. See Example 4.28.

Example 4.28. Measures 10-12 as a combination of mm. 1-3; 4-6; 7-9; with rhythmic liquidation.
Measure 13 begins a new section. Instead of starting with the main motive from m. 1, Webern begins with the first variation of the main motive from m. 4. This time the length of the motive has been reduced (liquidated) from three to two measures. See Example 4.29.

Example 4.29. Measures 13-17, rhythmic liquidation in the accompaniment.

Due to the reduction in measure length, group 1 already begins as a slightly liquidated version of the variation upon which it is based (m. 4). Group 2 begins by taking the slurred sixteenth-notes in m. 13 and contracting them into vertical dyads in m 15. The second dyad in m. 15 is elided with a compressed variation of the eighth-note/sixteenth-note motive from m. 14. Group 3 further liquidates the motive by replacing the individual eighth notes of m. 13 with the eight/sixteenth-note motive from m. 14 and then mimics the varied rhythmic motive of m. 15. Finally, in group 4 the rhythmic motive has been reduced to an eighth note followed by a sixteenth-note vertical dyad.

For the next series of rhythmic liquidations, Webern begins by repeating group 4, which creates a kind of symmetry similar to that of mm. 4-6 and 7-9. Then as expected, he starts with variation of group 2 followed by group 3 and then brings it to a close in m. 20. Example 4.30 shows how Webern accomplished this. The dotted line is the symmetry created by group 4.

\[\text{Example 4.29. Measures 13-17, rhythmic liquidation in the accompaniment.}\]

\[\text{Example 4.30.}\]

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\[\text{The reason this is expected is because Webern began m. 13 with a variation of m. 4-6, instead of mm. 1-3. To be consistent he begins the second liquidation motive with group two instead of group 1.}\]
A pattern is beginning to emerge. Directly preceding the moment Webern goes to the rhythmic liquidation in m. 13 he overlaps it with the rhythmic variations in m. 10. Directly before the middle the second half of the song he begins to overlap the symmetry and the second half begins to exhibit the use of symmetrical phrases.

Measures 21-22 serve as a transition between the two halves of “Des Herzens Purpurvogel.” A fundamental change takes place in the accompaniment, a change that was hinted at in m. 17. Visually there is an uneven symmetry in the piano, with pickups to mm. 21 and 22. In addition to this symmetry, the last two-thirds of m. 22 is a liquidated variation of m. 21 (shown with the boxes). See Example 4.31.
This dynamic symmetry will become the principal means of generating material for the remainder of this song. Measure 23 through the downbeat of 25 shows the first symmetrical gesture; however, it is heavily obscured by the way in which Webern beams the notes over the bar line between mm. 23 and 24. See Example 4.32.

*Example 4.32. Symmetry in m 23 to the downbeat of m. 25.*

As the symmetry becomes more complex it also starts to become clearer in mm. 25-27. See Example 4.33.

In mm. 28-31 the symmetry begins with the rhythm first introduced in m. 10. This importance of this rhythm becomes clear later in this chapter. See Example 4.34.

Example 4.34. Symmetry in “Des Herzens Purpurvogel,” mm. 28-31 with anacrusis.

In m. 32, the transition between stanza 3 and 4, Webern uses a truncated variation of the introduction in m. 1. In the second half of “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” m. 32 is isolated because it exhibits no symmetrical characteristics. Again Webern seems to be manipulating events surrounding the numbers 2 and 3. See Example 4.35.

Example 4.35. Axis of symmetry in “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” as m. 32, a retrograde of m. 5 (=3+2).

In m. 33 through the downbeat of 37, Webern uses the rhythm from m. 10 with some regularity and creates a near perfect symmetry at the accompaniment’s most complicated section. See Example 4.36.

In m. 37 Webern begins to bring the song to a close by shortening the length of the phrases and lessening the complexity of the rhythms. See Example 4.37.


The symmetry is continued in mm. 39-41 but is now combined with one last rhythmic liquidation. This is similar to mm. 15-19 (shown in Example 4.31), where Webern began to introduce the symmetry before the transition to the second half of the piece. See Example 4.38.
Example 4.38. Symmetry in “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” mm. 39 - 41.

In chapter 3, Example 3.5 showed the segmentation of P0 based on the text. This caused the individual set classes to liquidate and reconstitute one pitch at a time (4-3-2-3-4). In the first song this process appeared as rhythm liquidation in the accompaniment, which then returned in the first half of song 2. In the second half of song 2 Webern does this with the length of each successive symmetrical phrase. Notice the axis of symmetry in m. 32. The last occurrence of this motive appears in mm. 39-41. In the last symmetrical phrase Webern brings back the rhythmic liquidation, which slightly compromises the symmetry. Example 4.39 shows the symmetry and how there is an axis or threshold in m. 32.

In “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” Webern separates the rhythmic motives introduced in “Wie bin ich froh” and exhausts them one at a time. Measures 1-12 use variation to develop the initial gesture in the piano. Measures 13-20 develop the rhythmic liquidation. Measures 23-31 and 33-42 develop the dynamic symmetry in such a way that the phrases lengths also exhibit a symmetrical character, as shown in Example 4.43.
Example 4.39. Phrase length symmetry with m. 32 as the axis.
The row relationship between this song and “Wie bin ich froh” hints at a concerto form with the middle movement in the subdominant key, but the way in which “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” functions is indicative of the development section in sonata form.

4.3 “Stern, Ihr, silbernen Bienen”

The third and final song, “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen,” serves two important functions: 1) it is a variation of the first song “Wie bin ich froh,” and 2) it is itself a microcosm of the entire song cycle. “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” is composed of three main sections. Each section brings back some feature of its respective song (i.e. section 1 - song 1, section 2 - song 2, section 3 - song 3).

4.3.1 Form

Jone’s organization of “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” was a sestet composed of two parallel tercets (out of four verses) with a loose rhyme-scheme a - b - c; a\(^1\) - b - c\(^1\). Webern breaks with Jone’s binary division of the text and divides the verses into a three-part form; however, because there are four verses, his distribution of verses 2 and 3 to the middle section creates a binary division in the background. See Figure 4.5.

A introduction mm. 1-3:
stanza 1 mm. 4-24 (verse 1)

B transition 1 mm. 25-29:
stanza 2 mm. 30-51 (verse 2 and 3):

A\(^1\) transition 3 mm. 52-56:
stanza 2 mm. 57-76 (verse 4)
codetta mm. 76-78

Figure 4.5. Form of “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen.”
4.3.2 Text Setting

Although “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” is a variation of “Wie bin ich froh,” the time signature never changes from 2/4. The organization of the first and last three measures of this section resemble a 3/2 time signature. Beginning in m. 9 the internal phrasing is grouped into 3/4, which fulfills two purposes. First is a reference to the 3/4 time signature of “Wie bin ich froh” and is therefore a variation as well as a continuation of Webern’s constant blending of the numbers 2 and 3. See Example 4.40.

\[m.4\] \[3 \q h \q q\] \[\frac{3}{4} q h q h q\]

Example 4.40. Hyper-meter in the vocal rhythm, 3/2 mm. 4-6; 22-24) 3/4 (mm. 9-21).

The declamatory statement Sterne in m. 4 is similar to the opening of “Wie bin ich froh,” but now with two measures of rest before the continuation of the phrase. Webern ends the stanza by repeating the first tetrachord of P0 (like song 1) with the words, Blume der Liebe, or flower of love, recalling the floral imagery of “Wie bin ich froh.” In order to make this tetrachord fit with the text, Webern has to repeat an E♭ on the lyrics der Liebe. See Example 4.41.

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112 Wintle mentions this rhythmic process but states that it follows a 3/2 hyper-measure; in a sense he is correct, but I feel the internal portion of this section is better represented by 3/4.
Example 4.41. First stanza of “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” repeats the first tetrachord of P0. By repeating the first tetrachord of P0 Webern is able to start the second section with a C♯. In the second song, “Des Herzens Purpurvogel,” both verse 3 and 5 started on a C♯ and verse 5 was the only verse that began with a repeated note (C♯) so it is logical that he would choose C♯ to start the second section. See Example 4.42.

Example 4.42. “Sterne, Ihr silbenen Bienen,” stanza 2 (mm. 29-51).

Although there were no triplets in “Des Herzens Purpurvogel,” the song was in the simple triple meter, 3/8. Throughout this stanza Webern can also be seen making references to that meter with the quarter-note triplet figures. Remember in “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” the distribution of five verses over the two halves caused Webern to break with Jone’s form and give two verses to the first half and three verses to the second half. That shift from 2 to 3 is echoed in the second section of “Sterne, Ihr silbenen Bienen.” The second stanza is made up of two verses. Notice how the first part of stanza 2 (mm. 29-36) only gets two measures of quarter-note
triplets, whereas the second verse of stanza 2 (mm. 37-51) gets nine measures. When Webern
gives the majority of the quarter-note triplets to the second half of stanza 2, it creates another
subtle shift from two to three reminiscent of his verse distribution.

In stanza 3 Webern has combined elements from both stanzas 1 and 2. The declamatory
statement at the beginning on the word Ach is very similar to the setting of Sterne in mm. 1 and
2 only it is inverted to go up a sixth instead of down a third. Webern then references stanza 2
and includes one quarter-note triplet figure with the lyrics _tropfet sie_. Stanza 3 also functions as
a variation of “Wie bin ich froh.” In the first stanza of song 3 Webern brings back the perfect-
fifth transpositions which so heavily defined the first song. Now, for the third stanza, instead of
the perfect-fifths, Webern brings back the Bach motive, but with a kind of sleight. The motive
now appears in the voice with the word _Ach_, which begins with a B♭, thus rendering the name
Bach. See Example 4.43.

![Example 4.43](image)

_Example 4.43._ Bach motive at the beginning of stanza 3 (mm. 57-75), recalling the Bach motives
in “Wie bin ich froh.”

Following the Bach motive there is one measure of quarter-note triplets from the second
stanza and then Webern reintroduces the dynamic symmetry which so defined “Des Herzens
Purpurvogel.” Notice again how this was originally in the accompaniment and has now been
moved to the soprano. He then ends with the 3/4 hyper-meter from the first section of song.
See Example 4.44.
Example 4.44. Stanza 3 (mm. 57-75) symmetry hyper-meter.

With just this one phrase Webern is able to reference the first song with the Bach motive, reference the second song with dynamic symmetry, and reference first section of the third song with the 3/4 hyper-meter. These motives first appeared in the accompaniment but have now been transformed into the voice, consistent with the use of a program. As is shown below in this chapter, Webern is able to extend this metaphor of the accompaniment into song 3 if one considers the sparse, pointillistic nature of the accompaniment as a symbol for physical stars.

4.3.3 Accompaniment

The beginning of the accompaniment in song 3 is a variation of the opening gesture from song 1; however, the rhythm has been simplified to quarter-notes. It also has regular units like those found in song 1, but as Example 4.45 shows, it can be consistently grouped into three measure groupings resembling 3/2. 113 See Example 4.45.

The introduction begins with a small rhythmic trajectory to the four-note verticality on beat 2 of m. 2. Webern used these exact notes to set the exclamation “ich froh!” in the first song. By using it again here, Webern is, in an abstract sense, recapitulating that moment. 114

113 Wintle, “Webern’s Lyric Character,” 244.
114 This situation is similar to Schumann’s Fantasie in C major, op. 17. Schumann quotes Beethoven’s song 6, “Nimm sie denn, diese Lieder,” from the song cycle An die ferne Geliebte (To the distant beloved); this quote gives Schumann’s op. 17 the feeling of longing due to the text associated with that motive.
Example 4.45. Stanza 3 (mm. 1-24).

Remember that the four note verticality, B♭-F♮-B♮-D♮, is the only verticality that did not have a complement in “Wie bin ich froh,” whereas all other verticalities were answered by perfect or imperfect transpositions of themselves. Webern is now resolving this unanswered verticality by reiterating it and then providing its answer of related transposition. Although the transpositions are not perfect, they are both (0147) set class and Webern clearly makes it look as if it were transposed up a perfect fourth after the first word Sterne. See Example 4.46.

Example 4.46. Measure 2 and m. 8 perfect-fifth transposition of set class (0147).

The organization of the accompaniment in the second section is a little more ambiguous than the first. Here, as in the vocal line of section 2 (Example 4.2), there is a shift from

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115 Webern also does this with the (0145) set class from mm. 2-5 of “‘Wie bin ich froh’.”
groupings of two and three, to mostly groupings of three.²¹⁶ See Example 4.47.

Example 4.47. Groupings of two and three measures in mm. 25-50.

Webern also relates the accompaniment to song 2 in one very specific way. In “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” there were three sixteenth notes grouped together, in which the middle sixteenth note was a major-seventh (or diminished octave) dyad. Webern develops this rhythm in song 2 often appearing as variation in rapid succession. See Example 4.48.


This motive appears three times in the second section. It is identifiable by its slur and interval content in mm. 30, 37, and 46. This is the only time in the third song that Webern uses these slurs, clearly suggesting a connection between this section and song 2. See Example 4.49.

²¹⁶ Wintle observes that there are two sections of 4/2 offset by two sections of 2/4, but he does not elaborate on where this is; however, I think he is referring to this middle section where my groupings show something very similar to his description.
Example 4.49. Section 2, mm. 25-51, of “Sterne Ihr silbernen Bienen.”

In the third and final section Webern begins the vocal line with word *Ach*. Directly following this exclamation is a four-note verticality (0147) in m. 58. This same situation was first given in m. 8 and now has returned in a different inversion. See Example 4.50.

Example 4.50. “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” four-note verticality from m. 58.

Finally, Webern brings the song to a close roughly in the same manner he did in “Wie bin ich froh.” Although the rhythmic structure is ambiguous in the third section, an argument can be made that beginning in m. 51 with the second transition, Webern starts to liquidate the phrasing one measure at a time. It should be noted that the last grouping of three is the codetta, so there is a sense that Webern would repeat the liquidation and reconstitution pattern of Example 3.5 (chapter 3). See Example 4.51.
Example 4.51. Suggested phrase contraction in mm. 51-71.

Webern does give one last reference to the liquidation and reconstitution of set classes. In the introduction and transitions between sections Webern has built in a wedge form similar to the phrase symmetry in the second half of “Des Herzens Purpurvogel.” See Example 4.52.

Example 4.52. Phrase expansion of the accompaniment in the introduction and transitions of “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen.”

4.4 Conclusion

In “Sterne Ihr silbernen Bienen,” Webern recapitulates a couple of key elements from first the two songs. In the first section uses he perfect-fifth transpositions like those found in the
first song, “Wie bin ich froh.” For the second section Webern uses the slurred motive unique to song 2, “Des Herzens Purpurvogel.” Finally, in the third section Webern uses the Bach motive and brings back the symmetry, now in the voice. This is sufficient evidence to show that the songs in the cycle are related, like individual movements in a single work. The next chapter reconciles the analysis from parts I and II and discusses whether op. 25 can be qualified as programmatic. This is followed by an examination of the significance of Webern’s manipulation of the text and directions for future research.
CHAPTER 5
SYNTHESIS, MEANING, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

5.1 Synthesis

The conclusion of chapters 1 and 2 showed that the op. 25 text can be seen as a symbolic narrative of life, death, and resurrection. The form created by this narrative was ternary, following an A-B-A\textsuperscript{1} pattern. Chapters 3 and 4 used the concepts of *Grundgestalt* and the *Urpflanze* to show how this ternary form influenced the song cycle on several different levels. Although the music and poetry analyses strongly suggest the use of a program for the op. 25, two other issues need to be resolved before any definitive conclusions can be reached.

The first issue concerns the nature of the relationship between the accompaniment and the soprano. Although there is some communication on the surface between the soprano and accompaniment they are mostly composed as separate entities that function independently of one another (chapter 4). In the background, however, there are a couple of things happening on a more subtle level which require a descriptive analysis in order to derive potential meaning.

The accompaniment from “Wie bin ich froh” begins with a lively and playful rhythmic motive. Due to extreme register shifts notes pop out of the texture with an energetic and childlike quality. The voice from “Wie bin ich froh” is describing life with ecstatic language but in an innocent and naive way.\textsuperscript{117} The function of the voice is that of an obbligato line musically but from the viewpoint of the text it functions as a commentary on the action taking place in the accompaniment. This implies that Webern is associating the characteristics of the accompaniment, variation, rhythmic liquidation, and symmetry, with the principal meaning behind the poetry (i.e. the accompaniment is a metaphor for a corporeal life).

\textsuperscript{117} “How happy I am! Once more everything to me becomes green and lights up so! Yet to me the flower flowers over the world! Once more I am totally placed into becoming and I am on Earth.”
In “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” the voice, now in third person, describes a creature in the last moments of its life. As the song progresses the accompaniment slows down, the texture thickens, and the rhythm becomes sluggish and complicated until the final measures of the song, when it regresses and eventually dies out. Extending the metaphor of life being associated with variation, rhythmic liquidation, and symmetry, it is foreseeable that Webern would use these techniques until he had exhausted them one by one, and then, as a symbolic gesture of death, not bring them back.118

As a consequence of this symbolic death, the accompaniment in “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” has a different function. With regular phrase groupings of simple quarter-note patterns it provides some stability and functions in a more traditional manner. The voice from Sterne Ihr silbernen Bienen, however, now contains the motives that originally appeared in the accompaniment. Webern’s reason for moving the motives up to the voice is likely a direct result of the program created by the poetry.

If the accompaniment of “Wie bin ich froh” is associated with life, and in “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” it is associated with death, then the motives can be considered symbolic of a corporeal life. With this as a premise it is logical that the motives would no longer appear in the accompaniment of “Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen” having died a symbolic death in “Des Herzens Purpurvogel.” From the perspective that death is also metaphor for metamorphosis, transformation, and transcendence as was established in Chapter 2, it makes perfect sense that the motives would reappear above the accompaniment having literally and metaphorically transcended their corporeal form.

118As a metaphor for death it also gives the perception that “Des Herzens Purpurvogel” is a reflection on one’s life, or in this case, the life in ““Wie bin ich froh”. “
The conclusions of chapters 1-4 suggest Webern used the text as a program. The relationship between the music and the text certainly points to Webern having employed a program. Based on these conclusions there are two possibilities of how the op. 25 came to be. Either he used this text as a program, or Webern had a preconceived paradigm to which this text conformed. Considering the speed in which he composed op. 25, it is probably a combination of both but was it clear is that Webern used the text as a program or in a programmatic way.

This leaves the one remaining question: what is the significance behind Webern’s manipulation of the numbers 2 and 3?

5.2 Dichotomy of the Numbers 2 and 3

Webern has used these numbers on two different levels and for this reason they serve two different functions. First is the surface level. Recall that Webern continuously blends the numbers 2 and 3 by mixing duple meters with triplet groupings, triplet meters with a duplet groupings, ratios of sections by measure length, manipulation of verses, and even as structural markers such as m. 32 of “Des Herzens Purpurvogel.” The blending of 2 and 3 is so conspicuous and often antithetical to the meter it is hard not to speculate that it holds some sort of significance for Webern.

The numbers 2 and 3 have taken on a certain significance in Western culture that is still recognizable today. The first concrete evidence of these kinds of associations comes from Plato. Webern admired Plato, even mentioning him a few times in his letters and diaries. For instance, upon completing his Harmonielehre (1911) Schoenberg presented a signed copy as a gift to Webern, who reciprocated by giving Schoenberg a copy of Plato’s Republic.\(^{119}\) Also, in a letter

to Berg (1912), Webern states, “and do you know about the highest places on earth, where the best of mankind live? Invisible to us. Plato has already spoken of this and recently Swedenborg and Strindberg.”¹²⁰ According to Johnson, Webern idealized his image of heaven and with physical altitude of the mountains, which is what Webern is referring to in that quote; however, what this really suggests is that Webern knew Plato in an intimate way, like he did Swedenborg. This is important because one possible meaning behind the numbers 2 and 3 can be traced back to Plato’s Timæus.

In the Timæus, the politician and poet Kritias asks the Locrian philosopher, Timæus, to recount history beginning with the origin of the universe until the birth of mankind. While doing so Timæus discusses the anima mundi, or world soul.¹²¹ Timæus’s description is nicely summarized into the platonic lambda by the third-century music theorist, Aristides Quintilianus. Quintilianus attributes the left (duple/binary) side of the platonic lambda to bodily depth, the natural and affective, and to geometry (measuring [meter] the physical earth [geo]). The right side, or the triple/ternary side, of the lambda Quintilianus attributes to the incorporeal, the indivisible, and to arithmetic (measuring [meter] the number [arithmos]).¹²² See Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1. Plato’s world soul illustrated by the Platonic lambda.

¹²¹ Plato, Τιμαιος, 27A; 34-37.
¹²² Aristides Quintilianus, De Musica, p. 196
In chapter 2 Webern’s conception of communion with God is described as happening in nature, directly between man and God. If Webern considered the corporeal to be represented by the number 2, and the incorporeal and indivisible by the number 3, then it is possible that the blending of these ideas can be seen as Webern’s personal communion with God. Reasonable speculation also suggests that this could be why Webern used to the perfect-fifth interval so explicitly in the first song, “Wie bin ich froh.” In the harmonic series the perfect fifth is defined by the whole number ratio 3:2. Webern would have known this fact and could have easily considered it to be an extended metaphor for communion with God.\(^1\)

5.3 Perfection and Imperfection

The second level upon which Webern is manipulating the numbers 2 and 3 is in the formal construction. Recall Webern’s treatment of the verses. In the “Wie bin ich froh” four verses were distributed over each half. Of the five verses of “Des Herzens Purpurvogel,” Webern breaks with Jone’s form and distributes two verses to the first half, and three verses to the second half. He then divides the first half of the accompaniment into twelve- and eight-measure sections using the proportion of 3:2, and in the second half Webern creates an axis with the phrase symmetry around m. 32. Finally, in “Stern Ihr silbernen Bienen,” Webern distributes four verses over three sections, giving two to the middle section and one to the first and third section. It is clear on several different levels that Webern intentionally created a shift from 2 to

\(^{123}\) It is interesting to note that this could also be a reference to Psalm 23. It too fits the pattern of corporeal life (communion with God in nature, green pastures); death (walking in valley of the shadow of); and a spiritual afterlife (dwell in the house of the lord for ever \([sic]\)). “Psalm 23: The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. 3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.” [King David, “Psalm 23,” King James Bible: 400th Anniversary Edition (Oxford University Press, 2010)].
3. One of Bailey’s row charts for op. 25 inadvertently demonstrates this formal shift. See Figure 5.2.

![Bailey's row charts for op. 25 showing song 1 and 2 as binary and song 3 as ternary.](image)

*Figure 5.2. Bailey’s row charts for op. 25 showing song 1 and 2 as binary and song 3 as ternary.*

On the surface, Webern constantly combined various elements of 2 and 3 as a symbolic gesture. What gives this situation meaning is that 2 and 3 coexist within the same temporal space; however, with the formal shift from binary to ternary, 2 and 3 take on a different meaning and function from the one provided in Plato’s *Timæus*.

The themes of imperfection and perfection and their association with the numbers 2 and 3 can be found in the prevailing religious and music philosophies before and during the Renaissance. For instance, in his *Summa Theologica*, St. Thomas Aquinas refers to Christ’s resurrection and ties the idea in with the number 3: “Furthermore, by His rising on the third day, the perfection of the number three is commended, which is the number of everything, as having beginning, middle, and end.”

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Now consider that Webern’s dissertation was a transcription of a portion of the *Choralis Constantinus*, a large collection of motets by the late-fifteenth-century composer, Heinrich Isaac (c. 1450-1517). Isaac used mensural notation as was standard at the time for Renaissance composers. Having transcribed part of Isaac’s work, Webern must have been thoroughly familiar with mensural notation and its association with the idea of imperfection (the number 2, binary or duple), and perfection (the number 3, ternary or triple). This number association can be seen in the manuscripts of the early Renaissance composer, Jehan des Murs (c. 1290-c. 1344). Des Murs clearly relates the number 2 with imperfection (symbolized by the broken circles). Likewise, he clearly relates the number 3 with perfection (symbolized by the whole circles). The other terms, maior and minor, are synonyms for the terms perfection (maior) and imperfection (minor). Notice how minor is represented by two dots and maior is represented by three dots. See Figure 5.3.

![Figure 5.3. Jehan des Murs’s mensuration signs comparable to modern time signatures (i.e. a ≃ 9/8; b ≃ 6/8; c ≃ 3/4; d ≃ 2/4).](image)

In attempting to read meaning into op. 25, the only situation that can adequately explain the fundamental shift from 2 to 3 and not be in conflict with any of the established symbolism is the idea that Webern is metaphorically moving from imperfection to perfection. To be clear

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about the basic associations extrapolated from the text, the following shows how these concepts are connected.

1) “Wie bin ich froh”: corporeal life = imperfection; the number 2;
2) “Des Herzens Purpurvogel”: death = imperfection; the number 2 and the shift to 3;
3) Sterne, ihr silbernen Bienen: spiritual life = perfection, the number 3

Considering Aquinas' association of perfection with the number 3, the program of life, death, and resurrection, used in op. 25 can be seen as a metaphorical shift from imperfection to perfection. It is also likely that this concept would have some personal meaning for Webern based on his musical training, the subject of his dissertation, and his spiritual beliefs. Lastly, the idea of moving from imperfection to perfection actually complements and reaffirms the use of a program and is completely in line with Webern's philosophies concerning unity and comprehensibility.

5.4 Future Research

In the course of this research new systems of analysis had to be created in order to deal with the more unique qualities of op. 25. These new systems have already proven themselves to be useful as I was able to show that Webern’s preoccupation with unity and comprehensibility goes beyond that which is possible with serial and twelve-tone techniques alone. The potential to discover equally important concept’s in Webern’s other twelve-tone music is promising.

Overall there are three possible directions for future research:

1). The function of text as a programmatic guide in his vocal works. Webern’s use of text in op. 25 is extremely important in understanding its creation. The manipulation based on the numbers 2 and 3 on two distinct levels is likely to happen elsewhere in his music. For
instance, in the first song of op. 23, *Drei Gesänge*, there is a meter change from duple to triple which will need to be scrutinized for its potential symbolism and number manipulation.

2). The structural implications behind Webern’s use of a program. This could provide valuable insight into both his vocal and instrumental works. If Webern considered op. 25 a single work in movements, then his other song collections in sets of three, or multiples thereof, should be thoroughly examined to see if they exhibit the characteristics of a program or any combination of A-B-A1 (i.e. A-A1-B; B-A1-A). Any structural implications would not be at odds with Webern’s use of *Grundgestalt*; to the contrary, an argument could be made that op. 25 followed both a concerto or sonata like form, either by row relation and function of the movements.

3). Dynamic symmetry as an analytical concept. As a tool for analysis, dynamic symmetry in op. 25, and to lesser degree in op. 27, has already proven itself to be valuable for understanding surface-level phrase symmetries. In the case of “Des Herzens Purpurvogel,” dynamic symmetry acted as a structural determinant for the entire second half of that song. Other works written around the same time as op. 25 need to be examined for similar use of dynamic symmetry. These include opp. 23 and 26, in addition to op. 27.

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127 A five-movement work would also be a possibility (i.e. A-B-C-B\(^1\)-A\(^1\)).
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